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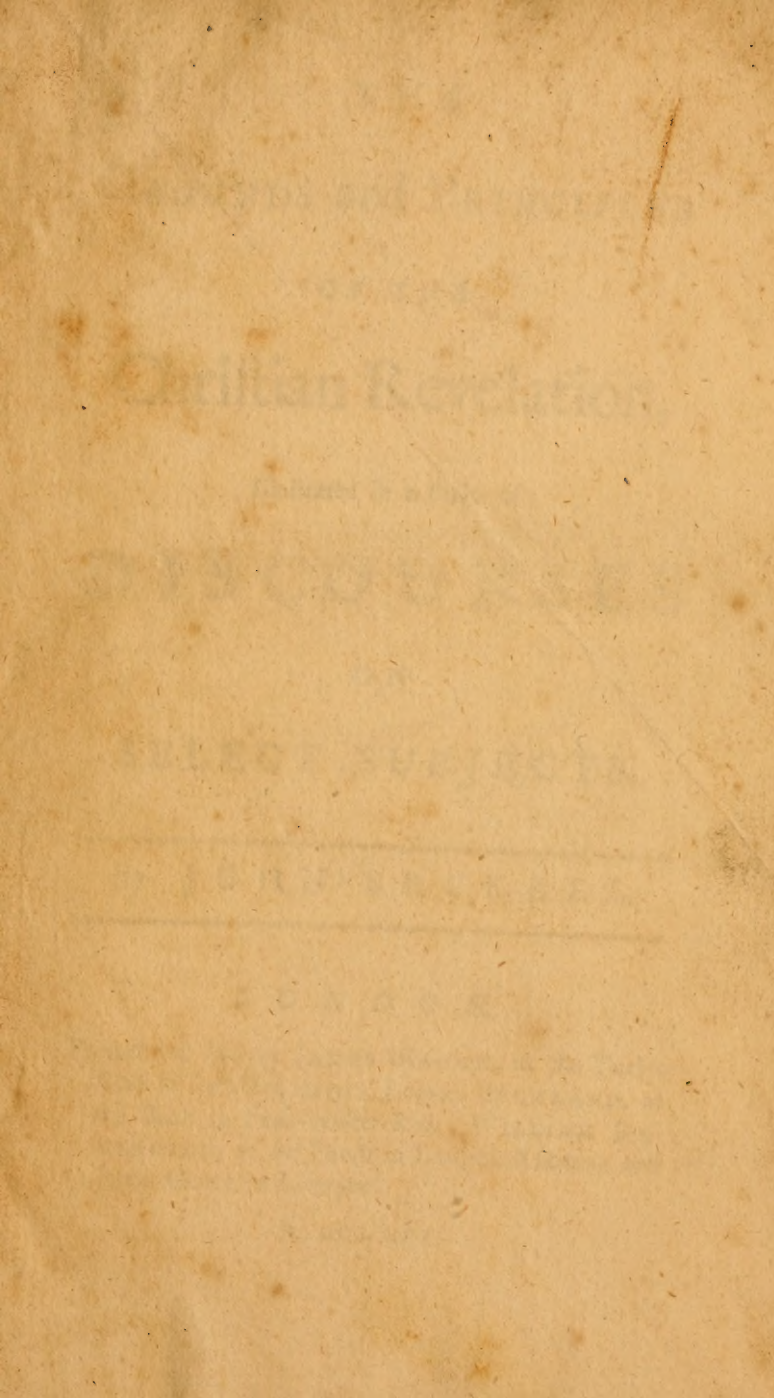
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THE
GROUNDS and PRINCIPLES
OF THE
Christian Revelation,
Illustrated in a Series of
DISCOURSES
ON
SELECT SUBJECTS.

By JOHN BREKELL.



L O N D O N.

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THE
 P R E F A C E.


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 T. Paul informed the *Athenians* (a), who fancied themselves to be a peculiar Race of Men, distinct from the rest of Mankind, and sprung from their native Soil (b), that, *God hath made of one Blood, all Nations of Men, for to dwell on all the face of the Earth, and hath determined the Times before appointed, and the Bounds of their Habitation* (c); that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him. In consequence of which, all the Tribes and Families of the Earth, in their several Settlements and Dispersions, are obliged to seek, and to serve God,

A 2

in

(a) Acts xvii. 26, 27.

(b) Vid. Gr. Schol. in THUCYD. Lib. I. Pag. 5. Edit. Francof.

(c) This, by the way, contradicts a Notion of STRABO, who seems to exclude a Providence from such Destinations and Appointments. Vid. STRAB. Geogr. Lib. II.

in the best manner they are able; according to their different Capacities, Opportunities, and Advantages, for religious Improvement.

If any *Colonies*, or *Classes* of Mankind, are left to the mere Light, and pure Instinct of Nature, for their direction in matters of Religion and Morality—though, by their tradition from one common Head, all the Children of *Adam* became *Heirs* of his Knowledge, and of the original Tradition delivered to their first Progenitors (*d*)—they are to follow the Dictates of their own Heads, and the Feelings of their own Hearts alone, in forming their religious and moral Sentiments. But when, over and above all the Advantages of natural Reason and Conscience, it hath pleased the *Father of Lights*, from whom proceeds the *good Gift* of the one, and the *perfect Gift* of the other, to favour the World with a *written Rule* of Religion, drawn up under a divine Inspiration; in this case, it must be equally the Wisdom, and the Duty of all Men, who have received this *heavenly Gift*, to study the *Word of God* well, and reduce their Principles to that sacred Standard; though without renouncing any previous

(*d*) See Dr. WINDER's History of Knowledge, chiefly religious.

previous natural Dictates, or Maxims of right Reason. This is a Duty more especially incumbent upon all *Protestants*, acting in character; for, according to the original Grounds of the blessed Reformation, they professedly make the *holy Scriptures* the Rule of their Faith and Practice.

In order to the right discharging of this great Duty, it is highly requisite that, in the regular use of our own Reason, we not only learn in general, to understand the *Language* of Scripture, but likewise more particularly, that we consider the *Words* and the *Sentences*, in their true and just Connexions.—

“ Not founding Doctrines, and building Systems upon single detached Texts; without regard to Connexion and Coherence, or the main drift and design of the Writer (*e*).” And, when all this is done, we must religiously attend to the *Natural* and *Genuine Sense* of *Scripture*, as expressly delivered by the *Oracles of God*; without presuming to tamper with those divine Oracles,

A 3

in

(*e*) “ A Practice which hath given rise to Superstition and Fanaticism in every Age; and which, at this Day, supports the Enthusiasm of all those, *who are sincere* among the *Methodists*,” says Dr. RICHMOND. Sermon. 1X.

in compliance with our own Prejudices and Prepossessions; or unfairly attempting to make them speak favourably to our private Notions, and preconceived Opinions, though contrary to the most plain and obvious Meaning of the sacred Writers.

This Method of *searching the Scriptures*, if duly observed, and closely pursued, would be of great use and service to all intelligent *Christians*, in reading the *Bible* to good Purpose, in forming and fixing their Principles properly, upon the Grounds of a positive divine Revelation. But if any Persons, more than others, are concerned and obliged to observe these *Rules* of Interpretation, with a scrupulous Exactness; who can they be, but *Christian Ministers*, whose Office it is to teach and instruct others in the Principles and the Duties of Religion? *For the Priest's Lips should keep Knowledge; and they should seek the Law at his Mouth; for he is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts (f).*

Nevertheless, by offending against one, or other of the above mentioned Rules, public Teachers are liable to mislead themselves, and others, into Mistakes about the true Meaning of *Scripture*, in Articles of more

or

or less Importance. (Which, by the way, is not the *Scripture's* Fault, but their own). Even Persons of good Learning, and well skilled in the Languages, may sometimes mistake the Sense of an Author, by not attending accurately to the Nature, Order, and Coherence of his Discourse, or (which is too often the case) by *wresting* and warping his Words to serve a favourite Hypothesis.

Into such Reflections as these, One is occasionally led by some Theological Pieces and Productions. And if any thoughts, of the like Nature, should occur to the Reader's Mind on occasion of what is now offered to the Public ; the Writer is not insensible, that he is *a Man of like Passions* with others, moving within the common dusky Sphere of human Weakness and Imperfection. But, as the Subjects, hereafter discussed, seemed to be of some Consequence, for *illustrating the Christian Revelation*, so he hath used his best Endeavours to set them in a proper and a practical light. And should his Attempt be so happy, as in any good measure to answer the Expectations of so many worthy Names—not a few of distinguished Rank and Eminence in the learned World—who by their Subscriptions, or otherways, have en-

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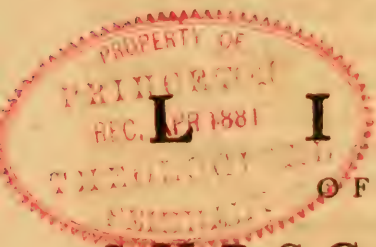
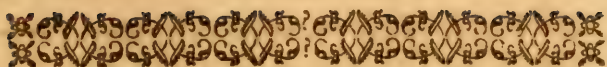
couraged

couraged and promoted this Publication ; he must think himself under a double Obligation to them, for their *Friendship*, and their *Candor* at once.

In the mean time, he would willingly hope, that Persons of different Tastes and Talents may meet with some useful Entertainment in the following Discourses, though they make not their appearance in the form of a regular and compleat System. But for the greater ease of common Readers, it was judged proper, and most expedient, to put some *critical* Remarks out of their way, by inserting them in *marginal Notes*, or *Appendixes* ; where they are deposited for the Use, and Perusal of those, who can relish such things, and know their Significancy in *sacred Literature*.

That *Scripture* Knowledge, serious Piety, and religious Virtue may flourish, and prevail more and more ; and that *the Word of God* may dwell in us richly in all Wisdom, so as to make us all wise unto Salvation ; is the fervent Prayer of the Author,





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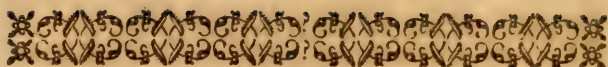
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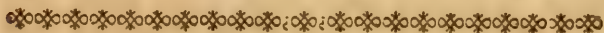
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*gence to make your Calling and Election
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To be Corrected.

PAGE 7. line 20. after *they*, add *may*. P. 20. l. ult. *Rub.* read *Relig.* P. 27. l. 9. *ively*, r. *lively*. P. 33. l. ult. *Truth*, read *Trust*. P. 34. l. 9. *it's*, read *the*. *ibid.* l. 11. *adapt*, r. *adopt*. P. 39. l. 7. *secrete*, r. *secret*. P. 50. l. 26. after *Christ*, add, or. P. 52. l. 8. *Israel*, r. *Isaac*. P. 58. l. penult. *Pædagogues*, r. *Pædagoguy*. P. 47. l. 10. after *faith*, add, I. P. 71. l. 13. *well*, r. *will*. P. 77. l. 5. *in*, r. *i. e.* P. 91. l. 23. after *spreads*, add, *terror*. P. 98. l. 18. *reserved*, r. *referred*. P. 116. l. 27. after *yet*, add, *we*. P. 141. l. ult. *Chofius* r. *Ctesias*. P. 149. l. 13. *single*, r. *signal*. P. 174. l. 26. *present*, r. *presents*. P. 186. l. 29. del. *not*. *ibid.* l. 10. after *upon*, add, *them*. P. 187. l. 12. after *than*, del. *that*. P. 212. l. 2. *was*, r. *is*. P. 217. l. 29. *who*, r. *whom*. P. 227. l. ult. after *JOSEPH*. lib. I. add, *contr.* *Apion*. P. 229. l. 25. *introduction*, r. *induction*. P. 250. l. 25. after *which*, add, *first*. l. 27. del. *first*. P. 258. l. 17. *this*, r. *his*. P. 275. l. 6. *there*, r. *here*. P. 227. l. 4. *instant*, r. *instance*. P. 281. l. 20. after *shall*, add, *all*. P. 302. l. 17. *creating*, r. *erecting*. P. 318. l. 22. *and*, r. *a*. P. 331. l. 22. *then*, r. *thou*. P. 344. l. 2. *faith*, r. *truth*. P. 355. l. 6. *the*, r. *that*. P. 361. l. 15. *with*, r. *without*. P. 384. l. 1. after *insufficient*, add, *for the end*.—P. 292. l. 14. after *is*, add, *by*. P. 398. l. 30. note (*e*) after *JOSEPH*, add, *J. B.* P. 451. l. 5. *bath*, r. *have*. P. 458. l. 20. after *with*, add, *them*. P. 484. l. 22. after *expression*, add, :



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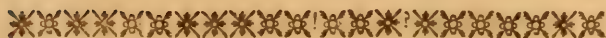
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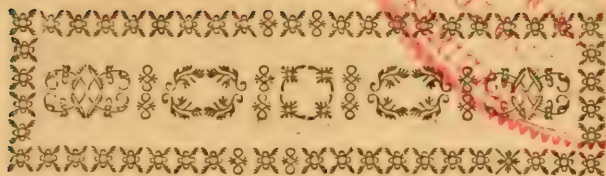
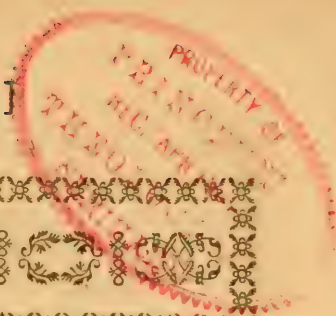
Christian Revelation

ILLUSTRATED IN A

Series of Discourses on select Subjects.







DISCOURSE I.

The Connection of Natural and Revealed Religion.

ROMANS ch. ii. ver. 14.

For when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by Nature the things contained in the Law, these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves.

FROM the general scope and design of his Discourse here, it is evident that in the words before us St. Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, could have no intention to magnify and extol the *light of Nature* in opposition to divine Revelation; *as the manner of some is.* On the contrary, what he aimed at was to shew, that as all mankind were subjects of God's moral government, and consequently under some divine law; so, having *all sinned* against him, and *come short of his glory*,

B 2

they

they all alike stood in need of his mercy, as revealed to the world in the *Gospel of his Grace* (a). In the same view it is, that I propose to consider this Subject; and for once encounter the modern *Deists* with their own weapons, by endeavouring to prove, upon their own hypothesis, (concerning the light of Nature and Reason, as a sufficient guide in matters of Religion) the great usefulness and expediency, not to say moral necessity, of the Christian Revelation.

The more perfect the light of Nature originally was in itself, so much the guiltier were mankind before God; and liable to the greater condemnation, for their having made no better use and improvement of that same light, than they had generally done in fact. Thus, the degenerate sons of men, being convicted upon their own principles, and condemned by that very *law of Nature* they were under, had great occasion for a *law of Grace*, and the Gospel proclamation of *repentance and remission of Sins*; which accordingly the kind and compassionate Saviour of the world commanded to be *preached in his name among all nations* (b). Therefore those very arguments, which have been commonly alledged *against* the Gospel, from the sufficiency of Nature's light, will prove, upon the whole, so many good and strong arguments

(a) Chap. iii. 23—26.

(b) Luke xxiv. 47.

ments *for* it. For, before the light of the Gospel appeared, the history of all ages and nations too plainly shews, and the rash opposers of the Christian Revelation themselves are forced to confess, that mankind had sadly abused and depraved the natural light of Reason, and were sunk into gross ignorance, superstition, and vice; or, in the modish phrase, *imposture and priestcraft*.

The Proposition, which I shall now insist upon, is *this*, viz. *By the light of Nature, without any written Revelation, the Gentiles, or Heathens, were in some measure a law unto themselves*. Which Proposition I shall briefly explain, and confirm by some proper Arguments; and so conclude with such Reflections, as may obviously arise from the nature of the Subject.

First, I shall briefly *explain* the Proposition. And here the question is, in what sense, or, in what respect, the Gentiles were, in any degree, a law unto themselves. In answer to which I observe, that as in every law there is both the *matter* of the duty enjoined, or the thing required, and likewise the *motive* annexed to it by way of sanction; so by the light of Nature alone mankind had *some* knowledge, sense and perception, not only of *what* they ought to do, but also of their *obligation* to do it (c). Thus, the *Gentiles*, who had not the moral

law written in *tables of stone*, like the *Jews*, had a law written in the *fleshy tables* of their hearts by the finger of God. So it follows in the next Verse after the Text, *which shew the work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing them witness, and their thoughts the mean while (or, within themselves) accusing or else excusing one another.*

By the mere light of Nature the Heathens were laid under such *rules* and *convictions* of duty, as that *some* of them acted in a degree conformably to the divine law, notwithstanding the general corruption in principle and practice, and so stood approved to their own consciences. On the other hand, many, indeed the most part, were censured, and condemned by themselves for acting contrary to the law of their own mind; *knowing the judgment of God that they, who commit such things, are worthy of death (d).* But both the one and the other were, in their measure, a law unto themselves. However it is with an eye to some Heathens of a better character, such, for example, as the famous *Socrates*, that the Apostle seems to speak more directly here in the Text. And in the same view we may understand his following words (e) *Therefore if the uncircumcision, keep the righteousness*

(d) Chap. i. 32.

(e) Ver. 26, 27.

teousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision, which is by Nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee who, by the letter and circumcision, dost transgress the law?

Having thus explained my Proposition in a few words, I proceed, in the next place,

Secondly, To confirm it, and prove the truth of it, by some proper arguments. Now, that by the light of Nature, without any written Revelation, the Gentiles were a law unto themselves, in some sort, will, I think, manifestly appear from the following plain considerations.

I. All revealed Religion implies and supposes some principles of natural Religion, as already entertained by those persons, who embrace the former. And so mankind must be previously a law unto themselves in some degree, that they be disposed and prepared to receive any positive Revelation upon rational grounds. For,

Every divine Revelation presupposes the belief of a God, and Providence, in those who embrace it. Because the Word of God does not go about to prove his *existence*, but takes it for granted as a received principle. And it is natural to think, that before a person can embrace any pretended Revelation, as coming from God, he must first believe and be convinced that there is a God. Therefore, this belief and persuasion must arise from

some other cause and source than the Revelation itself, as being antecedent to it. And accordingly there is that which may be *certainly known of God* by the light of Nature, and what is *manifest* to all men from his visible Works, *even his eternal Power and Godhead*, as the original Author, and supreme Lord of all things (*f*). Which leads me to observe, that some previous knowledge, not only of the Being, but of the Providence of God too, seems to be requisite in order to the belief and reception of any positive divine Revelation. For, if mankind supposed that God takes no notice at all of human affairs, nor any ways concerns himself with what passeth in our world; in that case they could never embrace a Revelation as coming from him, but they would immediately reject every pretence of that kind, as a thing incredible and impossible. For, what can be a plainer interposition of a divine Providence, than the exhibiting to mankind a divine Revelation? Besides, what evidence could there be in *miracles* themselves to prove the *truth* of such a Revelation, but upon *this* principle first admitted, viz. that the Providence of God governs both the *natural* and the *moral* world;

(*f*) Rom. i. 19, 20. τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ; i. e. *that which may be known of God*; meaning with *scientific certainty*, by way of distinction from conjecture and bare opinion. ὡς τὸ δοξασθὲν πρὸς τὸ γνωστὸν, κ. τ. λ. Plato. de Repub. Lib. vii.

world; and that therefore, as the stated course of Nature cannot be altered and changed without his concurrence, so he will not permit his rational creatures, the subjects of his moral government, to be unavoidably imposed upon by any false and lying wonders?

It seems then very plain and evident, that every divine Revelation, presupposes in them who embrace it, a belief in the Being and Providence of God. Which two articles of faith were commonly believed among the disciples of the light of Nature, amidst all the errors and mistakes that so generally prevailed in the heathen world (g). Moreover, every divine Revelation presupposes further, some acquaintance with the *moral character* of the Deity, and consequently a *moral sense* of Good and Evil. For, without a prior notion of these things, mankind could not be able to judge, what was worthy, or unworthy to be received as a Revelation from God. And so, they could not properly distinguish between *true* Revelation and Imposture; nor either embrace the one, or reject the other upon just and rational grounds.

To all which let me add. Every divine Revelation implies and supposes a secret sense and conviction of *duty* to God, previous to the reception of it. For, men must be convinced

(g) Jon. i. 7. Act. xxviii. 3, 4.

vinced aforehand of their lying under a *moral obligation* to obey the Will of God ; consequently to enquire after it in order that they may do it ; and so be ready to admit all reasonable evidence of truth, and of a divine authority enforcing it. I say, men must be convinced of all this, before they can be expected to give due attention, or pay a proper regard to any divine Revelation. For, without such a persuasion deeply impressed upon their minds, to deliver any message from God to men, would only be speaking to the wind ; and in that case every one would be ready to say with proud *Pharaoh*, (b) *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice ?*

Upon these considerations I conclude, that all *revealed* Religion implies and supposes some principles of *natural* Religion, as already entertained by those persons who embrace the former. And so in this view it appears, that by the light of Nature, without any written Revelation, the Gentiles were in some measure a law unto themselves.

II. The truth of this Point may be further argued and confirmed from the *Scripture Revelation* itself. For in the words before us St. Paul says, *When the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by Nature the things contained in the law ; these having not the law, are a law unto themselves : which (as it follows) shew the work of the law written in their*

(b) Exod. v. 2.

their hearts, &c. The same thing also is implied in what the Apostle had said just before. (i) *For, as many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law.* But where there is no law at all, written or unwritten, there can be no transgression. And therefore if any men might sin and perish without a written law; they must have had an unwritten law, or a law written only in their hearts. The same sentiment is again suggested afterwards. (k) *What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.* If they were all under sin, they must of consequence have been all under some divine law; tho' not precisely under the same law in all circumstances. Because, as was hinted before, where there is no law, there is, and can be no transgression; *for Sin is a transgression of the law* (l). In short therefore, the truth of the Point, here under consideration, is necessarily implied and supposed in the very nature of the Christian Dispensation. For the Religion of the Gospel is a Religion of *Grace*, subsequent to the Religion of *Nature*, and suitably adapted to the miserable case and condition of guilty perishing sinners; for *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* (m)

And

(i) Ver. 12. (k) Chap. iii. 9. (l) 1 Joh. iii. 14.
 (m) 1 Tim. i. 15.

And who, or what are sinners? But rebels in the moral kingdom of God, and seditious violaters of his holy laws. *Do we then make void the law thro' faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law* (n); that is, in it's obligatory and binding force upon all mankind, as a divine rule of life, and moral action. For, there had been no occasion for the Gospel, which is a *law of Grace*, if men had not been transgressors of a former law. Which law therefore will still remain in force, as a rule of life and manners, so long as there are any sinners in the world to be saved.

III. This Point may receive some further light and illustration from *experience* and *observation*, grounded upon fact. A method of proof this, which the Apostle himself hath suggested in the words before us. For, he argues the matter from the moral character and conduct of some of the wiser and better sort of Heathens, saying in the Text, *When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves.* Not that the Gentiles did *generally* practise these things; for St. Paul had largely shewn the contrary in the preceding chapter (o). But yet he supposes that by the light of Nature *some* of the Heathens might be led to practise the things contained in the divine law;

(n) Rom. iii. 31.

(o) Ver. 18—32.

law ; and, when they did so, in any case or instance, and in any degree, they were so far a law unto themselves. Yea, it was an indication of some general law of Nature common to all men. For, tho' there might be comparatively few such virtuous and good characters, as the Apostle describes, among the Heathens, yet as human Nature must be supposed originally the same in all persons, the same religious and moral sentiments may be presumed to be natural to all men alike ; tho' not equally cultivated and improved in all.

From the *actions* of some unenlightened Heathens, let us proceed to their *reflections* ; and it will further appear, that they were in some measure a law unto themselves. By their reflections I understand here the reflections of their own minds, both in good and bad men, passing a judgment upon their own actions. And this topic also the Apostle hath well illustrated in the words following the Text. *Which, says he, shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing them witness, and their thoughts the mean while, or within themselves, (p) accusing or else excusing one another.* Thus, privately within their own bosoms, without any other judge, plaintiff, or defendant, besides their own consciences, their secret thoughts and reflections *accused, or excused,*
acquitted

acquitted or condemned, men by the light of Nature, and a moral sense of Good and Evil, according as they practised the one, or the other. In which view the heart-felt power and force of natural conscience is described in very strong terms, by some of the heathen Writers themselves (*q*). But, in this case, I need only appeal to every man's own experience of what passes in his own mind, upon an impartial review of his moral behaviour. The truth is, human Nature is so framed by the wise Author of our rational and moral beings, as that pleasing or painful feelings and reflections flow from a person's being conscious to himself of acting well or ill, right or wrong, in any instance. A native beauty there is in virtue; and there is a natural turpitude and deformity in vice, which powerfully affect the soul of man in a very different and contrary manner. For, as every guilty heart is inwardly tortured with shame, remorse, and fear; so the conscious sense

(*q*) ——— Hic Murus aheneus esto,
Nil conscire sibi, nullâ pallefcere culpâ.

HORAT. Epist. Lib. I. Ep. I.

————— Cur tamen hos tu

Evassisse putes, quos diri conscia facti
Mens habet attonitos, & surdo verbere cædit,
Occultum quatiente animo tortore flagellum.
Pœna autem vehemens, ac multo sævior illis,
Quas et Cæditius gravis invenit, aut Rhadamanthus,
Nocte dieque suum gestare in pectore testem.

JUVEN. Satyr. Lib. XIII.

sense of well doing fills an upright mind with chearful confidence, and holy joy.

To what hath been said concerning the *actions* of Heathens, and their *reflections*, I might now add some of their excellent *words*, their wise sayings and sentences, in order to display the force and vigor of the light and law of Nature in their rational minds. But from their wise maxims, perhaps, it can be inferred with no certainty, what they might learn from the mere unassisted light of Nature and Reason; because their Philosophers might receive their best notions from some hints of Revelation, or ancient Tradition; even those of their wise men who lived *before*, as well as those who flourished *after* the Gospel period of religious knowledge. Nor is this any late suspicion, as appears from a passage in a learned Father (*r*), who quotes that saying of *Numenius*, the *Pythagorean*, “What is *Plato*, but *Moses* atticising,” or speaking *Greek*? Which plainly intimates that in his opinion, the famous *Plato* himself derived some of his finest notions, and brightest thoughts from the writings of *Moses*, tho’ some modern Writers will not allow it. Therefore without enlarging upon this head, let it suffice for the present to observe, that *Cicero* speaks of (*s*) “a supreme law, which existed

(*r*) CLEM. ALEXAND. Strom. Lib. i.

(*s*) De legib. Lib. I. See SYKES Connex. of Nat. and Rev. Relig. chap. xi.

existed thro' all ages, before there was any *written* law." And now, having mentioned that celebrated Writer, it may not be improper to take notice of a pious sentiment advanced by him upon another occasion (*t*): "No man, says he, ever became eminent without a divine *afflatus*." And thus he seems to have acknowledged the necessity of a divine concurrence in all good and great undertakings, to bring them to effect, and crown them with success. How amiable does it appear in so great a man, to express such a devout sense of dependence on God! Nor were Heathens strangers to the duty of Prayer (*u*). It was a rule with them, to *begin with God* (*w*). However, it must be confessed, they too generally addressed their Prayers to a wrong object (*x*). Now, laying all these things together, the result of the whole seems to be this Conclusion. That, by the light of Nature, without any written Revelation,

(*t*) De Nat. Deor. lib. 2. (*u*) Jonah i. 5. (*w*) Vid. Arat. Phænomen. a princip. (*x*) Note—The ignorant Vulgar were generally so little acquainted with the true God, that they are said, to have been *without God in the World*. Eph. ii. 12. ἄθεοι, is literally, *Atheists*. And says CLEMENS of *Alexandria*, Admon. ad Gent. "I may properly call them Atheists, who are ignorant of the true God." Upon the same ground, the popular Religion of the Heathens is called by another ancient Writer, *atheistica Polytheism*. ORIG. cont. *Gels.* lib. 3. This contradicts a modern notion, "that all, who worship any God, worship the same God." under different names. See *Acts*. xiv. 12—15.

velation, the Gentiles, or Heathens were in some measure a law unto themselves. And I shall only add further, upon this head, the pertinent observation of an ancient Moralist.

(y) “ To obey right Reason is the same with
 “ obeying God ; for the rational Nature, by
 “ it’s own native light, dictates the same
 “ things, that the divine law enjoins.”

Thirdly, I am now to conclude with some Reflections upon the subject. And,

I. From hence we should learn to think worthily of human Nature, and to treat the whole human species with due respect, and becoming regard. *Jews* and *Gentiles* alike, *Indians* and *Negroes*, the most rude and uncultivated nations of the world, whatever disadvantages of education they labour under, are all to be considered as a part of God’s rational and intelligent creation. For, they are dignified with the same nature with ourselves. Therefore they ought not to be despised, or used as brute creatures, but treated like our fellow-men, with all the honour and respect that is justly due to the human form. Because, as they are advanced into the same rank of beings with ourselves, so they are the offspring of the same Parent, the care of the same Providence, and capable of the same religious and moral improvements under proper cultivation.

(y) *HIEROCL.* in *Aur. Carm.*

C

II. We

II. We may here see and admire the wisdom and equity of the divine Administration with reference to mankind at large. For, as they are all subjects of God's moral government, so they enjoy some, tho' not the same or equal advantages for religious improvements. Those, who are not favoured with a written Revelation, have a *law written in their hearts* ; and, in proportion as they are *a law unto themselves*, they are to be governed, and will be judged by the law they are under. Therefore, there is no just ground for complaining, that a divine Revelation is not *universal* ; tho', by the way, the Christian Revelation seems to have been far more extensive at the beginning, than may be commonly imagined ; for by the ministry of the Apostles the light of the Gospel appears to have shone upon all the civilized parts of the then known world (z). How much less ought those persons to raise loud complaints upon this head, who affect to magnify and exalt the light of Nature at so high a rate ! Says a learned Divine of the last age (a), " With respect to former ages, " God gave them out light, as they were " able to bear ; tho' we know not perfectly " what their condition was ; yet this we " know, that as no generation needed more
" light,

(z) See Mat, xxiii. 14. Mar. xv. 15. Jam. i. 1. Act. 5, &c. (a) OWEN on Heb. i. 1.

“ light, than they had, for the discharge of
 “ the duty required of them ; so more light
 “ would have unfitted them for somewhat
 “ or other, which was their duty in their
 “ respective generations.” To which let me
 add, as there may be different degrees of
 happiness in a future state, so “ a *propor-*
 “ *tional* light here may be the most fit to
 “ answer the ends of Providence at pre-
 “ sent.” (b)

III. If the Gentiles were a Law to themselves, by the light of Nature, it follows not that, in fact, they generally acted conformably to the inward law of their mind. For, St. *Paul* had largely proved the contrary in the preceding Chapter, with respect both to Religion and Morals. Consequently the light of Reason, or the *law of Nature*, did not supersede, or render useless, the light of Revelation, or a *law of Grace*, but prepared the way for it. What is it, but a vulgar error, to imagine, that it is any disparagement of the Christian Revelation, to suppose that mankind had any proper means at all of knowing their duty, before the light of the Gospel appeared in the world? For, quite the reverse. On that very supposition the great usefulness, expediency, and importance of the Christian Revelation may be clearly discerned, and strongly evinced. Because

mankind, *Gentiles* and *Jews* alike, had sadly abused their respective advantages for Religion, and were become greatly corrupt both in principle and practice.

This matter of fact hath been lately set in a clear light by an excellent Writer, *whose praise is in the Churches* (c). Now, in consequence of this great degeneracy, the greater means of religious improvement any persons or nations had enjoyed, so much the greater sinners they were before God, and proportionally had the greater occasion for the *Gospel of his Grace*, at once to call them to repentance, and to assure them of pardon ; as I hinted at the beginning of this Discourse. *Since all had sinned*, more or less, *and come short of the glory of God*, not having glorified him as God ; they all stood in need of *being justified freely by his Grace, through the redemption that is in Christ* (d). Admit that “ the wise, and sagacious among the Heathens knew that they should *repent* ; and “ that this was one of the first Principles, “ which they received from the mind, or “ right Reason (e).” Pray, what was this to the bulk of mankind ? Besides, what human wisdom and sagacity could discover the *obligation*, or the *motive*, and encouragement to

(c) Dr. LELAND. The Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation.

(d) Rom. i. 2. iii. 23, 24.

(e) Lord HERBERT Rub. of the Gent. Ch. xv.

to repent, in so clear, so strong, and so striking a light, as that of *the glorious Gospel of the everlasting God*? Lo, here we have a solemn embassy from Heaven, introduced by a public Herauld (crying with a loud voice, *Repent ; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*) and attended with the clearest attestations of a divine commission, to negotiate a treaty of peace and reconciliation between the King of Kings, and his revolted subjects, proclaiming pardon to all repenting sinners, by the mediation of his own Son (*f*). How then can we set too high a value upon this wonderful dispensation of divine *Grace and Truth* which *came by Jesus Christ* (*g*)! And who can but pity the blindness, the pride, and presumption of those self-sufficient men, who cannot see, or that will not acknowledge their need of it, and their great obligations to a wise and gracious God for it! But, more to be pitied still are those unhappy persons, who call themselves Christians, and yet live no better than Heathens under that Gospel, wherein *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, that hold the truth in unrighteousness* (*h*). Therefore I cannot well conclude without adding one Reflection more.

IV. How strong are the obligations, that lie upon us Christians, to be truly pious, and

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good,

(*f*) 2 Cor. v. 18—21.

(*g*) Joh. i. 17.

(*h*) Rom. i. 18.

good, and *holy in all manner of conversation* ! Because we are a law unto ourselves, as well as other men. And besides, we also enjoy the additional aids and advantages of a divine Revelation, whereby the great principles, the important duties, and the most interesting motives of Religion are plainly set before us in the strongest point of view. If Heathens were a law unto themselves, it was not without some difficulty that they would attain any clear and extensive knowledge of their duty ; or of sufficiently strong and prevailing inducements to the practice of it. *Haply they might seek after God, and find him (i) ; and haply not ; And, as it did happen, in fact, they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened (k) ;* such darkness generally prevailed all over the heathen world, that one of their own best writers complained in his days (l), “ that scarce the least glimpse of the light of “ Nature appeared.” But, my fellow Christians, we stand a much fairer chance for saving knowledge, holiness, and heaven, if we look about us, and take proper care, in this our day, to see and mind the things, which belong to our peace, before they are hid from our eyes for ever. *How shall we*

(i) Act. xvii. 27.

(k) Ut nusquam Naturæ lumen appereat. CICERO. Tusc. Disput. III.

(l) Rom. i. 21.

we escape (l) condemnation, or be acquitted before the righteous bar of God, if we neglect so great a Salvation!

(l) Heb. ii. 3. ἐκφεύγομεθα. Note—This word answers to *evasisse*, in the passage before cited from *Juvenal*; and it seems to be a forensic term, for being acquitted in a Court of Judicature. ἐκπέφυγεν αἵματος οἴκην. *Æschyl. Eumenid.*





DISCOURSE II.

The Oracles of God committed unto
his Church.

ROMANS iii. 2.

—*Unto them were committed the Oracles of
God.*

WHICH words are thus introduced,
Verses, 1. 2. *What advantage then
hath the Jew? Or, what profit is there of Cir-
cumcision? Much every way; chiefly because
that unto them were committed the Oracles of
God.* This then, we see, is what St. Paul
mentions as one great benefit, and peculiar
advantage of God's Church under the Jewish
dispensation. And, as the Church of God
under the Christian dispensation must be sup-
posed equal, at least, in point of privilege;
from hence therefore I shall take occasion to
observe that,

*The Oracles of God are committed unto his
Church.*

In

In discoursing upon which Observation I propose.

I. To consider, what we are to understand by *the Oracles of God*.

II. To shew that these Oracles of God are *committed unto his Church*. And then conclude with some Inferences and Reflections.

I. I shall consider, what we are to understand by *the Oracles of God*.

And here let it be observed, in a more general way, the Oracles of God denote the Revelations of God's Will to his Church and People. Some persons talk of the *Oracles of Reason*. And Reason, to be sure is the gift of God. In which respect the dictates and discoveries of right Reason, so far as they go, may not improperly be called the Oracles of God. For, *there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding (a)*. There is a *law written in the fleshly tables of mens hearts*, by the same hand that wrote the Ten Commandments on Tables of Stone (b). But it is in another, and higher sense, that St. Paul mentions the Oracles of God in the Text, where, speaking of the Jewish Church, he says, *unto them were committed the Oracles of God*. In which words by the Oracles of God cannot be merely intended the *Oracles of Reason*; because

(a) Job xxxii. 8.

(b) Rom. ii, 15. Exod. xxxii, 15, 16.

cause these Oracles were no more committed unto the *Jews*, than to any other Nation, or People, being equally common to all mankind as rational and moral agents. But the Apostle here speaks of it as a peculiar privilege of the Jewish Church, that *unto them were committed the Oracles of God*. And so likewise does the holy Psalmist (c). *He sheweth his word* (or words, i. e. *his Oracles*, as the same Hebrew word * imports) *unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgements unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord.* “Praise the Lord, for
 “such distinguishing favours and benefits
 “conferred upon his own peculiar People,
 “above all other nations of the world.”

It is plain then, that the Oracles of God properly denote, not the Oracles of *human Reason*, but the Oracles of *divine Revelation*. And thus, “by the Oracles of God we are
 “to understand the Revelation, which God
 “made of himself and his Will, by miracu-
 “lous voices, angelical messengers, and
 “especially by inspiring the Prophets in
 “their writings (d).” Which leads us to observe more particularly, that the Oracles of God may be considered under a two-fold notion, namely as *spoken*, and as *written*.

I. The

(c) Psal. cxlviii. 19, 20.

* רָבִדָּו

(d) PEIRCE in Heb. v. 12.

1. The Oracles of God may be considered as spoken; or delivered by word of mouth, before they were committed to writing. In this view we may understand the words of St. Stephen, speaking of *Moses* (e). *This is he, that was in the Church in the wilderness, with the Angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers; who received the lively Oracles to give unto us.* The lively, or the living Oracles, as the words * import; the Oracles, which were delivered unto *Moses*, *vivâ voce*, by the *Angel which spake to him in the mount Sina*. And so, from the manner in which *Moses* received them, they might be called the lively, or living Oracles.

It is to the same way of delivering the Oracles of God, I mean by word of mouth, that the Apostle hath a reference, when he tells the *Hebrews* (f), *God, who at sundry times, and in diverse manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son; whom he hath appointed heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds. Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person &c. The express image of his person; or rather, the character of his substance.* “Not
“ his person, or substance, or being itself; but
“ a bright resemblance, and true representation of it.” As the word *character* comes from

(e) Acts vii. 38. * λόγια ζῶντα. (f) Chap. i. 1, 2.

from a *verb*, which signifies to *engrave*, it is the ingenious conjecture of a learned Writer (*g*), that the Apostle may here allude to the engraving on *Aaron's* breast-plate, which was inscribed with these words, *Holiness to the Lord* (*h*), or *Jehovah*, God's peculiar Name. And thus, as is said of the Angel in the wilderness, which conducted the *Israelites* (*i*), *the Name of God was in him*, as his own representative among men.

Now, if this allusion be allowed, I would take the liberty of supposing further, that in the preceding words, *the Brightness of his*, i. e. of God's *Glory*, the Apostle may allude to the *Urim and Thummim*, in that same breast-plate (*k*). Which, according to the opinion of some learned men, consisted of *bright, shining Gems* (*l*); and was consulted, in difficult cases, as an *Oracle* (*m*). Thus then, our Lord Christ is represented as the Oracle of God, whose Nature, Perfections, and Counsels, he revealed to the world. And so, from the manner of their delivery, these divine Revelations themselves might be called, not only Oracles, but *living Oracles*.

For illustration of this matter, let me refer you to those words of St. Paul, (*n*) *God, who caused the light to shine out of darkness,*
bath

(*g*) Dr. J. OWEN in loc. (*h*) Exod. xxviii. 36.

(*i*) Exod. xxiii. 20, 21. (*k*) Exod. xxviii. 30.

(*l*) Vid. J. CLERIC, in loc.

(*m*) 1 Sam. xiv. 18. xxiii. 2, &c. (*n*) 2 Cor. iv. 6.

bath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. To whom therefore may be applied, what an ancient unknown Writer says of Wisdom (o). “ She is the “ brightness of the everlasting light, the “ unspotted mirrour of the power of God, “ and the image of his goodness,” which is the greatest perfection. For, when the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among men, who beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father ; this Word Incarnate was full of Grace and Truth (p). Thus was this divine Oracle, like the Urim and Thummim (what these words imports) Light, and Perfection ; the light of Truth, and the perfection of Grace and Goodness. As in old time, holy men of God spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost (q) ; so Christ was a living Oracle in his days ; and such also in their measure, he made his Apostles and other Ministers of the word, when pursuant to his own promise, they received the Spirit of Truth to guide them into all (or the whole) Truth, (that is, of the Gospel-scheme (r).) Now, in consequence of this, all those divine Truths, which they delivered in the Name of God by word of mouth, might be properly called his Oracles, his lively, or living Oracles. In which view we may

(o) Wisdom of SOL. vii. 26.

(p) John i. 14.

(q) 2 Pet. i. 21.

(r) John xvi. 13.

may understand the Apostle *Peter*, saying, (s) *If any man speak*, let him speak as (or, as speaking) *the Oracles of God*.

And thus we have considered the Oracles of God under one notion, viz. as spoken, or pronounced, and delivered by word of mouth.

2. The Oracles of God may be also considered as *written*. For God speaks to his Church and People *now* in his written Word, as properly as he spake to them in time past by the mouth of his Messengers. Thus the Apostle, citing a passage from the book of Psalms, which is part of God's written Word, introduces it in this manner, (t) *Wherefore as the holy Ghost saith*, (u) *To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*. Moreover, when *Moses* gave unto the Israelites *the lively Oracles*, which he received from God, as mentioned before, (x) he gave them in *Writing*. For, *Moses wrote all the words of the Lord* (y). And so, in this way and manner, *unto them were committed the Oracles of God*; that is to say, in written Instructions, and handed down to posterity in the *holy Scriptures*, which *Timothy* had known from a child, and which, as *St. Paul* told him, (z) *were able to make him wise unto Salvation, through Faith, which is in Christ Jesus*. Which last words, viz. *through Faith*
which

(s) 1 Pet. iv. 11.

(u) Psal. xc. 7.

(y) Exod. xvii. 4.

(t) Heb. iii. 7, 8.

(x) Acts vii. 38.

(z) 2 Tim. iii. 15.

which is in Christ Jesus, include the Christian Revelation.

This leads us to observe, that the Oracles of God under the Gospel Dispensation also, were committed to writing at the beginning of the Christian Church for the benefit of all succeeding ages. A much better and safer method of conveyance, than mere oral tradition, which is liable to great corruptions, and hath, in fact, introduced many errors and mistakes into all those religious Systems, that were founded upon it. In opposition therefore to every thing of this kind, it is equally our wisdom and our duty, *earnestly to contend for the Faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints* (a); that is, *once* at the beginning of the Christian Church, and *once for all*, by *preaching*, and in *writing*, and both under the same divine direction, which was no less necessary in the one case, than in the other. “For (as an ancient Christian Writer says well) (b) “we have not known
 “the method of our Salvation by any other
 “persons than those, by whom the Gospel
 “came unto us. Which indeed they then
 “*preached*, but afterward by the Will of
 “God delivered to us in the *Scriptures*, to
 “be for the future the *pillar*, and *ground of*
 “*our Faith*.”

But

(a) Jude ver. 4.

(b) IREN. Advers. Hæres. Lib. III. Præf.

But so much, at present, for the first thing proposed to consideration, viz. what we are to understand by the *Oracles of God*. It hath been observed, that the Oracles of God denote the Revelations of his Will to his Church and People, as first *spoken*, or preached, and afterwards *written* in the *Scriptures of Truth*; which, as they contain the *lively Oracles*, are far from being a *dead Letter*. For the word of God, however delivered, is *quick*, and *powerful* (c). It must needs be a *Soul-quicken- ing*, and an *Heart-warming Word*; because it is a *Soul-saving word* (d).

II. I proceed now to shew, that these Oracles of God are *committed unto his Church*. And under this head of Discourse I shall enquire these two things.

1. In *what respect* the Oracles of God are committed unto his Church. And,

2. *Why*, and upon what account; or for what *End* and Purpose they are so committed.

1. In what respect the Oracles of God are committed unto his Church. And, I would

(c) Heb. iv. 12. Note—If the Apostle here alludes, as some Writers think, to the force of *Lightning*, it seems more proper to read *the Word of God is fervid*, &c; deriving the participle ζῶν, not from ζάω, *vivo*, but from ζέω, *ferveo*, this latter *Verb* also being *contract- ed*. e. g. Ως δὲ λέβης ζεῖ ἐνδοῦ, ἐπειγόμενος πρὸς πολλῶν.
i. e. Ut vero lebes fervet intus dum urgetur igne multo.
HOMER. Iliad. XXI. 362.

(d) Jam. i. 21.

would observe, they are imparted to his Church, as a divine *Donation*; and they are intrusted with his Church, as a sacred *Depositum*.

(1.) The Oracles of God are imparted to his Church, as a divine *Donation* or gift. So *Moses received the lively Oracles* from God, by the ministry of an *Angel*, to give them to his people (e). And thus, the divine Oracles are a *gift*, a most valuable gift, and distinguishing favour. And, as it is a free, gratuitous favour, which no nation upon earth can justly demand by a claim of right, it can therefore be doing no wrong or injury to any, if God in his sovereign Wisdom sees fit, to grant it to some people, and withhold it from others. For, *is it not lawful for him to do what he will with his own* (f)? But, if those, who are not favoured with the Oracles of God, have no ground to complain of any *injustice* on that account, it is certain, on the other hand, that all, who have received this heavenly gift, are greatly indebted to the divine goodness for it, and indispensibly obliged to make the proper use and improvement of it; of which more hereafter. At present I go on to observe,

(2.) The Oracles of God are intrusted with his Church, as a sacred *Depositum*. *Unto them*, says the Apostle, *were committed the Oracles of God*; were committed in Truth, as the

(e) Acts vii. 38.

(f) Matth. xx. 15.

word ἐπιστεύθησαν imports. The Church of God then is the *repository* of his holy Oracles, for their safe custody and conservation. And this is the only sense, in which *the Church of the living God* can be called the *pillar and ground of Truth* (g) (if it may be properly so called at all) “ as it *firmly retains, upholds,* “ and *professes* the Christian Truth, against “ all its force, violence, and opposition of “ earth and hell, of men and devils, that endeavour to overthrow it ;” to adapt the words of a learned Author, who remarks, that “ *σύλος* frequently signifies such a *pillar,* “ as stood before their common Halls, and “ Courts of Judicature ; upon which the decrees and orders of the Court were wont “ to hang, or be fixed. — And the word “ *εδραίωνα*, *ground*, signifies not the *foundation*, but the *seat* where any thing is placed ; so as to be settled and laid up, to remain and abide there ; and at the most “ can mean no more, than the *stay* or *establishment*, the *seat* or *settlement* of “ *Truth* (h).”

In this double respect then, the Oracles of God are committed unto his Church, according to the foregoing account ; they are imparted to his Church, as a *divine Donation*, or gift ; and they are intrusted with his Church, as a *sacred Depositum*.

2. Pro-

(g) 1 Tim. iii. 15.

(h) Pillar and Ground of Truth. Page 63. 4to.

2. Proceed we now to enquire, *why* and upon what Account, or for what *End* and Purpose the Oracles of God are so committed. Now, the general end and design of this divine Dispensation, is to serve the cause, and to support the interest of true Religion in the world. But more particularly; the Oracles of God are committed unto his Church, to be a standing rule of doctrine and discipline, of Faith, Worship, and Practice; and finally, to make his people *wise unto Salvation*.

This is the Rule, which God hath given us, whereby we may glorify him here, and enjoy him for ever hereafter; directing us, both what we are to believe concerning God, and also what duty God requires of us. Thus St. Paul, writing to *Timothy*, tells him, (i) *From a Child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, through Faith, which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in Righteousness; that the Man of God may be perfect (or perfected, that is, in sacred knowledge,) thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

In scripture language, by a *Man of God*, is meant a *Minister of God*; such as *Timothy* himself was. And so the Apostle tells him, that the *divinely inspired Scripture* would fur-

D 2

nish

(i) 2 Tim. iii. 15—17.

nish him with all proper directions in the right discharge of his Office, for the best edification of common Christians. Now, if the Scripture shews, what Ministers are to teach the people, by consequence it also shews, what the people are to *learn*. However, the sufficiency of Scripture, as a perfect Rule of Religion, if rightly understood and applied, cannot fairly be alledged as an argument against the necessity and usefulness of a standing Ministry. For *this* being a Gospel Institution, and so one material part of the Gospel Scheme, the sufficiency of Scripture ought, in all reason, to be considered, not in *opposition* to a standing Ministry, but in *connexion* with it. Therefore, if the *holy Scriptures are able to make the Minister of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work*, in his sacred Function; it follows not, that the people do not ordinarily want the assistance of living teachers and guides in Religion, but rather the contrary. For the language of the Apostle implies and supposes the ministerial Office, as a *sacred* Institution, and so, by consequence, a *useful* Institution in the Church of God, to publish, expound, and apply his holy Oracles from time to time. Every *Man of God*, properly so called, is, in fact, a Minister of God, of his own appointing (*k*). But this by the way.

Upon the whole then, from what hath been said may be strongly inferred the great
indis-

indispensible duties of *religious Gratitude* for the divine Oracles, of the *strictest fidelity* in preserving them, and of *holy diligence* in improving them, for the sacred purposes of Religion.

1. We certainly ought to be very *thankful* for the Oracles of God. Because, as hath been shewn, they are a divine Donation, and a precious gift of heaven ; a *free* gift, which might have been denied to all, as it is to some, without injustice to any. Therefore, without censuring the divine Dispensations towards others, let us be gratefully sensible of God's distinguishing love and kindness to ourselves, in favouring us with the inestimable benefit and blessing of his own Oracles. In which respect I may say with St. Paul, *(l)* *By Grace ye are saved, through Faith ; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.* For, as the same Apostle says upon another occasion, *(m)* *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.* But from whence cometh the Word of God ? I answer, from the gift of God. Let us therefore be sincerely and affectionately thankful for this *unspeakable gift*. *He hath not dealt so with every Nation ; praise ye the Lord.*

2. As we ought to be very thankful for the Oracles of God, so we should be no less *faithful* in preserving them too. Because, as you have been told, they are a sacred *Depos-*

D 3

tum,

(l) Eph. ii. 8.

(m) Rom. x. 17.

tum, and most important trust. As such they were committed unto the *Jewish* Church; and under the same notion they may be regarded in the Christian Church also, with equal, if not greater reason and propriety. For, as one observes, (n) “ The *Mosaic* law
 “ was a *temporary* Constitution, and only a
 “ *shadow of good things to come* (o). But the
 “ Gospel being in its duration, as well as
 “ intendment, *everlasting* (p), it is an in-
 “ finitely more precious *Depositum*, and so
 “ with greater care, and solemnner attestati-
 “ on to be preserved. Not only the Clergy,
 “ or the People of one *particular* Church;
 “ or the Clergy of the Universal are intrust-
 “ ed with this care; but it is the charge,
 “ the privilege, and duty of every Christian
 “ Man, that either is, or was, or shall be
 “ in the world; even that collective Church,
 “ which above all competition is *the pillar*
 “ *and ground of Truth* (q).” — Let us then,
 my Brethren, look well to the *Bible*, which
 is the *Religion of Protestants*. Being fully
 convinced, on the most rational grounds, that
 the holy Scriptures are a sufficiently perfect
 Rule of Religion, without any unwritten
 traditions (r); let us ever protest against the
 sacrilegious impiety, while we pity the stu-
 pid blindness of that Church, which would,
 in

(n) Lively Oracles, Sect. IV. 2.

(o) Heb. x. 1.

(p) Rev. xiv. 6.

(q) 1 Tim. iii. 15.

(r) See Divine Oracles,

in effect, (shocking to think at) *silence* the Oracles of God, by prohibiting the free use of the Scriptures, and keeping them locked up from the common people in an unknown tongue. Oh, false and faithless Trustees of the sacred *Depositum* ! Which they may rather be said to steal away, and secrete, than to keep and preserve for proper use. Which leads me to observe in the last place,

3. We should all be very *diligent* in improving the Oracles of God, for the sacred purposes of Religion. Because for this great and good end they are committed unto his Church. Therefore let it be our serious care and study, to form our Religion upon the Scripture plan, and model in all points, as much as possible. For, though in matters of *doubtful Disputation*, there may be room for debate, and so different persons may think different ways, and all have an equal right to think each in his own way; yet no rational consistent Christian, can go contrary to the plain sense and direction of Scripture in any case voluntarily, and out of choice. For, by the same liberty that he departs from this divine Standard of Religion in one instance, he may do it in another, and so in all. And what must become of his Christianity *then* ? Or, what pretensions can such a person have to the christian name and character ? Therefore, so far as we can, and may be practicable in present circum-

stances, let us assert and maintain a Scripture Religion, and diligently improve the heavenly Oracles, for that great and excellent purpose. This, in reality, is making the right use of them, and applying them to their proper end and design ; a design most worthy of God, and most beneficial to his Church and people.

In order to excite and engage you to this work, consider the *Wisdom*, the *Kindness*, and the *Authority* of the Speaker in these Oracles of *Truth*. His wisdom contrives, and his goodness designs our greatest good, in all his institutions and dispensations. And then the authority of God is supreme, and so justly demands the most profound reverence and regard to the majestic voice of his own Word and Oracles. Therefore let us give such awful and devout attention to the Voice of God speaking unto us in his holy Word, as that our *profiting* thereby *may appear to all* (s) ; for, this will equally redound to our honour and advantage. But on the other hand, what a shame and reproach must it be for any persons, who are favoured with the Oracles of God, to be little wiser or better for them ! And yet this was in fact the case, with many professed Christians in the Apostle's time. For the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, tells them in plain terms, (t) *When, for the time*
ye

(s) 1 Tim. iv. 15.

(t) Heb. v. 12.

ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God.

It is observable, that the Gospel had then been preached, and by many embraced, in the *Hebrew Nation* about *thirty* years (*u*). And so at the time of writing this Epistle to them, many of the *Hebrews* were Christians of near thirty years standing; or they might be said to be Christians about thirty years old; which was the age, when the *Levites* entered upon their Office (*x*). And to this circumstance the Apostle may be thought to allude, in telling the *Hebrews*, *when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God*, or, *the Principles of the first Oracles of God*, viz. those of the Old Testament (*y*). Strange indeed, that Christians of so long a standing should be no better acquainted with the divine Oracles! What could be the cause of this unaccountable ignorance?

Did not the *Hebrews* value the *Holy Scriptures*? Yes; very highly; for *in them they thought they had eternal life* (*z*). But they did not search the Scriptures properly, so as to learn

(*u*) Vid. Bp. PEARSON, Annal. Paulin. p. 20. Usser. Annal. p. 687. Dr. LARDNER, Credib. Supplem. Vol. II. p. 386.

(*x*) Num. iv. 3, 4.

(*y*) See Mr. PEIRCE in loc. (z) John v. 39.

learn the meaning, and understand the voice of God's Oracles. This, in some persons, might be owing to *a slowness of apprehension*, arising from carnal prejudice, and corrupt affections, which darken the understanding, bias and pervert the judgement. Accordingly the Apostle tells the same persons (a), *Ye are νοῤῗς dull of hearing*. And this rendered *many things*, which he had to say, *hard to be understood* (b). — Again, others might make little proficiency in Scripture knowledge through a *backwardness* to religious inquiries, flowing from a secret alienation of mind from God, and the things of God. And so in this respect also persons may be *dull of hearing*, as they are *slack* and *remiss* in attending to the Voice of God's Oracles, and the Word of divine instruction (c). Once more, *spiritual sloth* and *indolence*, proceeding from no settled aversion, but only a cold indifferency and lukewarmness in Religion, may be the reason of some persons being little wiser or better for the divine Oracles. *Be not slothful*, says the Apostle in the next chapter (d). Thus may persons be dull of hearing, as they are drowsy and slothful hearers of God's word. And, if any men are too indolent and lazy to inquire after sacred truth, they

(a) Ver. 11.

(b) See 2 Pet. iii. 16. and Dr. WHITBY in loc.

(c) See Eccles. iv. 29. where the word νοῤῗς is used in this sense.

(d) Ver. 12. νοῤῗς.

they may very well be ignorant alike of the Principles, both of the first and the second Oracles of God; I mean the Oracles both of the *Old* and the *New Testament*. In this case, the truth of that Observation is affectingly verified, *(c) God speaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not.*

Therefore, my Fellow-christians, let us all take warning by such examples, and be upon our guard against every miscarriage of this nature, cherishing in ourselves a right frame and temper of mind for the attainment of true heavenly Wisdom. Let us give due attention to the Voice of his holy Oracles, directing our eyes to the *Father of lights*, that it may please him, in the use of our own serious endeavours, by the *sacred Scriptures to make us wise unto Salvation, through Faith, which is in Christ Jesus.* Amen.

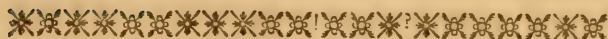
(c) Job xxxiii. 14.





DISCOURSE III.

The LAW introductory to the
GOSPEL.



GALATIANS iii. 24.

*Wherefore the Law was our School-master to
bring us to Christ, that we might be justified
by Faith.*

THE coming of Christ, the Son
of God, and the Saviour of men,
was introduced, and ushered into
the world, with all the solemnity
which became so great a Character, and such
an important Event. That promise of a Re-
deemer was given to our first Parents soon
after the Fall (a), viz. that “the Seed of the
“woman should *bruise* the serpent’s head.”
In consequence of which, time was preg-
nant, as it were, all along from the begin-
ning with a Saviour; until *the Fulness of time*
came, when it should be delivered of this
great

(a) Gen. iii. 15.

great Birth. Upon the foot of that original promise it seems highly probable, that the sacred Rite of expiatory *Sacrifice* was instituted by divine appointment, as a standing prefigurative memorial of the great *Propitiation for the Sins of the whole world* (b). A Rite, which in following ages became as universal, as the use and application of that great Sacrifice, typified thereby, was intended to be. And thus, in effect, the Gospel was *emblematically* preached unto all Nations before the coming of Christ; the ancient Sacrifices, particularly the *Sin-offerings*, representing God's *displeasure against Sin*, and his *compassion for Sinners*, in an evangelical light.

The nation, which was favoured above all others with typical and prophetical notices of the Messiah, was the *Hebrew*, or *Jewish* nation, of whom, as concerning the flesh Christ came. For, besides the promises that were made to *Abraham*, and afterwards renewed to the other Patriarchs, the Law of *Moses* itself, which was given from Mount *Sinai*, with manifest tokens, and most awful displays of a glorious divine Presence: I say, this

(b) 1 John ii. 2. Note—The most ancient Sacrifices appear to have been *Burnt-offerings*. Vid. OUTRAM de Sacrafic. Lib. I. Cap. X. Sect. 1. HYGIN. Lib. II. 15. LOWMAN Rational. of H. R. S. 147. Therefore the origin of Sacrifices cannot be properly deduced from the custom of friends *eating and drinking* together, according to Dr. SYKES's Hypothesis.

this *Law had a Shadow of good things to come* (c). Now, when the *Body*, or the substance of that shadow was exhibited, it was highly fit and proper, in the natural order of things, that the shadow itself should vanish and disappear. For, there could be no further occasion to look at the picture, after the living face was presented to public and common view. Accordingly this is the point, which *St. Paul* is here arguing against those Jewish Christians, who strenuously maintained, in prejudice to the liberty of the convert Gentiles, that *except* they were *circumcised after the manner of Moses* (and so obliged themselves to *keep his law*) they could *not be saved* (d). An opinion the more dangerous to the Christian Church, as it tended to keep up the Partition-wall between *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and thereby greatly obstruct the general conversion of the latter to the Religion of Christ. *St. Paul* therefore, their great Apostle, their zealous, and faithful advocate, according to the wisdom given unto him, combats and confutes that mischievous error, by certain *Arguments*, from which he draws this conclusion in the Text, *The Law was our Pædagogue or Instructor unto Christ* (e), (so the words run in the original) *that we might be justified by Faith*.

In

(c) Heb. x. 1.

(d) Acts xv. 1, 5.

(e) 1 Cor. iv. 15.

In discoursing upon which words I shall proceed in the following method.

I. I shall premise some account of the *Law* here spoken of.

II. Shew in what respect this *Law* was a *Pædagog* unto *Christ*, or Instructor for him. And,

III. Consider the proper End and Design of this Dispensation, viz. *that we might be justified by Faith*. Shall then conclude with some Reflections upon the Subject.

I. I am to premise some account of the *Law* here spoken of. And it is plain from the scope and design of the Apostle's discourse, that it is the *Law of Moses*, which he intends; the same *Law*, which was 430 years after the promise made to *Abraham* (f). Concerning this *Law* St. *Paul* may be observed sometimes to speak in low, and lessening terms; calling it by the name of *weak*, and *beggarly*, or *poor elements* (g). And this hath given occasion to some Writers, of a particular complexion, to run down the *Law of Moses* at a strange rate; at the same time pleading the Apostle's authority for their so doing. But these *poor Critics* cannot, or will not distinguish as they ought, between what St. *Paul* said *absolutely*, and what he spake only in a *comparative* sense. In comparison
with

(f) Ver. 17.

(g) Gal. iv. 9.

with the *Gospel*, I grant, the Apostle hath spoken of the *Mosaic* Law very diminishingly; and I add, very justly too, considering the superior excellency of the Christian Dispensation; but he was far from disparaging the Law of *Moses* absolutely, or any ways representing it as an institution unworthy of God to be the Author of it. This is a notion, which his head never conceived, and his heart abhorred. For, in answer to that question (*b*), *What advantage then hath the Jew? And what profit is there of Circumcision?* He replies, *Much every way; chiefly because that unto them were committed the Oracles of God; particularly the lively Oracles, which Moses received at the Mount Sinai* (*i*). And again, speaking of the same people, he says (*k*), *Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law and the Promises, &c.* Here you see, *the giving of the Law* is mentioned by St. Paul, amongst other divine favours, as one of the peculiar honours and prerogatives of the *Hebrew* nation. And thus he admitted a glory, a divine glory in that Institution; though he attributed a greater and more excellent glory to the Gospel Dispensation; and makes the *face of Jesus Christ* to shine brighter than the *face of Moses* (*l*).

And

(*b*) Rom. iii. 1, 2.

(*i*) Acts vii. 38.

(*k*) Rom. ix. 4, 5.

(*l*) 2 Cor. iii. 7, &c. iv. 6.

And verily, if the circumstances of persons and things, at the time when the Law was given, be duly considered, it will appear to be a wise and excellent Constitution, suitably adapted to answer the good ends it was intended to serve, till the world was prepared for a more perfect and extensive Dispensation of Religion. So that the *Mosaic* Law is not without proper *internal* marks and characters of a divine Original. And then with relation to *external* proofs and attestations of it's being a Revelation from God, it hath on it's side the clear evidence of divine Miracles, which are the most proper seal of a divine mission. So the sacred History relates (*m*). *And there arose not a Prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses* (by whom the Law was given) *whom the Lord knew face to face : in all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land : and in all that mighty hand, and in all that great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.* Therefore the *divine Legation* of *Moses*, is firmly established upon the most solid grounds, to any common understanding, without any learned and laboured *Mediums* to support it. — If we only attend to the solemn Manner of *giving the Law*, we shall see it accompanied with such a concurrence of striking circumstances, as became the Wisdom and Majesty

(*m*) Deut. xxxiv. 10—12.

jeſty of God, and had an apt tendency to inſpire the Iſraelites with the moſt lively ſentiments of a religious Faith and Fear. You may read the account at large in the Book of Exodus (*n*) ; where you will find a diſtinct and orderly narrative of that great and public tranſaction (too public to be liable to any ſuſpicion of fraud and impoſture) and ſuch an amazing ſcene laid open, as is enough, even at this diſtance of time and place, to ſtrike any ſober and ſerious mind with the moſt profound Reverence and Awe.

Now, when we conſider the great ſolemnity with which the Law of *Mofes* was given, and reflect upon all the other illuſtrious proofs of his divine Legation, both Jews and Chriſtians too, may very juſtly have it in high eſteem and veneration. But there is one peculiar excellency in this divine Law which the Jews overlooked, I mean the *Analogy* and Relation it had to the Goſpel Diſpenſation ; for, as the Apoſtle here obſerves in the Text, *The Law was our Inſtructor unto, or for, Chriſt, &c.* Which leads us to,

II. Inquire in what reſpect this Law was a *Pædagog*, or Inſtructor for Chriſt, unto *Chriſt*, particularly with regard to the *Jews*. And here let me obſerve, the beauty and force of the Apoſtle's fine compariſon is loſt in our Engliſh Tranſlation, by reading the
words,

(*n*) Chap. xix. xx, &c.

words, *the Law was our School-master to bring us to Christ*. For the office of a *School-master* was very different from that of a *Pædagog* among the Ancients. These were two separate and distinct offices; the proper business of a *Pædagog* being only to take care of children in their *minority*, to watch over their *behaviour*, and to form their *manners*, till they were fit to go to a *Master*, and be put to *School* (*o*). And thus, according to *St. Paul's* elegant comparison, *Christ* is the proper *Master*; and so the *Law* was but a *Pædagog*, or *Instructor* unto *Christ*, to prepare men for christian erudition. *For one is your Master, even Christ* (*p*).

This being premised, in a more general way, I proceed now to inquire particularly, in what respect the *Law* sustained the character, and performed the office of a *Pædagog*, or *Instructor* unto *Christ*. To which end I observe,

1. The *Law* of *Moses* prescribed certain *marks* and *means* of *distinction*, between the people of *Israel*, and other nations.

E 2

One

(*o*) Antiquo illo ævo *Pædagogi* distincti a *Præceptoribus*. Nam isti nihil nisi assclæ erant, et ut puerorum progressus, actiones, mores observarent aut formarent. At *Præceptores* docebant, et artes scientiasque infundebant, &c. LIPSIUS. in *Plant. Pseudol. Act I. Sc. V.* edit. Gronov. Not. Var. Confer. *Xenoph. de Lacedem. Reipub.* Clem. Alexand. *Pædagog.* sub fin. S. Chrysof. in loc. item S. Hieronym. &c.

(*p*) *Matth. xxiii. 8.*

One peculiar badge of an Israelite, was *Circumcision*, the sacred sign and token of God's *Covenant with Abraham*, and his *Seed* also; as the nature of the Rite itself aptly signified. Nor was the proper use and significancy of *Circumcision* lost, by it's being applied to the rest of *Abraham's* posterity, besides *Israel* (in whom his seed was to be called) and from them derived to other nations. For the *eighth* day's *Circumcision* appears to have been peculiar to the Israelites (*q*). Besides, the traduction of this sacred Rite to other nations, particularly the people of *Egypt*, that great sink of superstition, may be looked upon as a kind of prelude to the future calling of the Gentiles, and their admission into the Gospel Covenant, when the Covenant of peculiarity with the Jews should be superseded under the Christian Dispensation. But this by the way.

It is further observable, that besides the Rite of *Circumcision*, the Law of *Moses* made a *distinction* in *Meats*, and in the manner also of *preparing* them. Now, this was a wise contrivance and precaution to cut off all free and familiar intercourse between the Israelites and other nations, and thereby prevent the former from being corrupted with the vile and vicious manners of the latter. And with the same view the Hebrew Ritual descended so far, as to prescribe a *particular Dress*,

(*q*) Vid. ORIGEN Cont. Cels. Lib. V. p. 263.

Dress, and give directions even about the manner of *wearing their Hair*; that so an *Israelite*, like a Clergyman, might be known by his habit, and upon that account be the more upon his guard against doing any thing unworthy of his character (*r*). Now, all these things, how trivial and trifling soever they may seem to a prejudiced, careless, or undiscerning eye, had a visible tendency to regulate, and *form their manners* for the better; which was the proper work and business of a *Pædagog*, as was shewed before.

2. The Law of *Moses* instituted a number of other Rites and Ceremonies, partly in *condescension* to common prejudices; and partly in *opposition* to popular and prevailing Customs.

The latter of these things, I suppose, will be readily granted; viz. that the Law appointed certain Rites and Ceremonies in *opposition* to popular and prevailing Customs. This is the way that *Maimonides*, the learned Jew, hath taken (*s*), (and doubtless a very natural way it is) to account for a great number of the ritual Laws; Laws, which (however they may appear to vulgar eyes, yet) viewed in that light, discover the great wisdom of the divine Lawgiver; as they were a proper *fence* against the superstitious and idolatrous Customs of the surrounding nations. — Now

E 3

this

(*r*) See Deut. xxii. 12. Levit. xix. 27.

(*s*) More Nevochim.

this was acting the part of a discreet and faithful *Pædagogus*; using proper precaution to prevent the *Infant-Church* from falling into mischief, by keeping it in safe *custody*. Which sentiment the Apostle hath expressed in the verse before the Text, by saying, *We were kept* (or guarded) *under the Law, shut up* — shut up, as it were in a court, and secured from danger within certain precincts by a *partition-wall*. In similar language, one says in *Plautus* (t) “ He sent a servant with me, “ who had been my *Pædagogus* from a “ child, that he might be, as it were, my “ *keeper* or guardian.” Thus then the Law of Moses may be conceived to have prudently instituted certain Rites and Ceremonies in *opposition* to popular and prevailing Customs.

But is it likely, or at all probable, that divine Wisdom would appoint any Rites and Ceremonies in *condescension* to common Prejudices; or in compliance with any superstitious Customs of other nations; as it were to *humour* the Church of God in her *Infancy*, by way of connivance, or indulgence? This notion, which a certain Writer hath suggested, and endeavoured to support with a great deal of learning (u), gives no small offence to some other learned and good men; who are not a little shocked at the supposition, that the Religion of the Jews, in it's divine
Institu-

(t) Mercat. Act I. Sc. I.

(u) SPENCER de legib. Hebr.

Institution, should any ways symbolize with the Religion of the Gentiles. And it must be confessed, that the authorities, by him produced, are too late to prove his point clearly. It is true, some similitude of Rites may be discerned in the Jewish and the Gentile Religions. But then the Gentiles may rather be supposed to have derived from the Jews, than the Jews from them; or perhaps from *some natural* principles common to both. Because it cannot be shewn, with any degree of certainty, that the Gentiles used the same religious Rites so early as the Jews; and consequently it does not appear that the latter derived from the former. — After all, if I might be allowed to interpose my own opinion in this case, I think the matter may be compromised, and the dispute brought to a fair issue, by supposing that,—in condescension to the superstitious tempers of the *Israelites*, which they had contracted in *Egypt*, divine Wisdom might think fit to indulge them in the use of some religious Rites and Ceremonies, which otherwise had not been appointed, but were afterwards adopted by other nations. In which view we may understand the following words. (x) *Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, &c.* — Now, this was making the Law to supply the place of a wise Pædagogus. For, says

E 4

an

(x) Ezek. xx. 25.

an ancient Writer (y), “ Good Pædagogues
 “ do not cross the inclinations of children in
 “ every thing, but often connive at them,
 “ and sometimes *indulge* them.”

(3.) The Law of *Moses* seems to have appointed certain *Types* and *Shadows* of Christ, and of the Christian Dispensation. “ For, as
 “ a learned Divine hath observed (z), the
 “ *Jews* being bred among the *Egyptians*,
 “ who were wont to express their *divine* and
 “ *moral* Doctrines by *sensible* images, or Hieroglyphicks; God in compliance therewith (the *Jews* being infinitely fond of
 “ the manners of *Egypt*) thought it meet at
 “ first to express the Gospel to them in the
 “ same *typical* manner; i. e. to represent
 “ the whole *method* and *oeconomy* of it in visible signs and figures, &c.” This notion seems to be confirmed by that petition of the holy Psalmist. (a) *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law.* (b) And the Apostle to the Hebrews says, (c) *The Law had a shadow of good things to come.* Again, speaking of the *Jewish* Rites and Ceremonies, St. Paul says, (d) *Which are a shadow of good things to come, but the body is of Christ.* And that those things had a spiritual meaning and signification, is strongly implied

(y) SIMPLIC. Comment, in Epist. Cap. 34.

(z) Dr. SCOT'S Christian Life. Part II. Chap. 7.

(a) Psal. cxix. 18.

(b) Vid. J. CLERIC. in loc.

(c) Heb. x. 1.

(d) Col. ii. 17.

implied in the following Remark upon the High-Priest alone going once every year into the most holy place. (e) *The holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first Tabernacle was yet standing.* Which words deserve the particular attention of those, who deny the doctrine of *Types*. For, how could the holy Ghost be said to signify so much by the forementioned circumstance, but in the way of *typical* representation?

The learned Dr. SPENCER, whom I have referred to before, was far from being possessed with a spirit of allegory, and endeavours all along to account for the ritual Laws of *Moses* in an historical manner. But yet even that great Writer, before he hath done speaking of the Law concerning the *Red Heifer* (f), hath these memorable words. (g)
 “ It cannot be denied that in certain circumstances of the Heifer, some evangelical mysteries were concealed.—Because the Apostle calling the blood of Christ, *the blood of sprinkling* (h), may be supposed to allude to *the water of sprinkling*, mentioned in this Law (i). And the Psalmist having been guilty of murder, and desiring to be expiated with the blood of Christ, prayed
 “ to

(e) Heb. ix. 8.

(f) Num. xix.

(g) De legib. Hebr. Lib. II. Cap. 26. Sec. 6.

(h) Heb. xii. 24.

(i) Num. xix. 9. according to the LXX.

“ to be *purged with byssop* (k), as a type and
 “ symbol of that blood. In these and other
 “ things (says the Author) the truth so dis-
 “ covers itself, that it stands in need of no
 “ further light.”

Now, those sacred types the Apostle is thought to call the *Letter* of the Law; and their mystical sense, or spiritual meaning, the *Spirit* of the Law (l). For he tells us (m), *The Lord is that Spirit*. The Law of *Moses* may be conceived to resemble his own face, when covered with a vail; and so it had in it an hidden glory; but the *vail is done away in Christ* (n); and so the light of his glorious Gospel shines unto us without a shade. In which view the *Law* may properly be considered as a *Pædagog* unto *Christ*. For it was an antient method of instructing children, to make use of *allegories*, *emblems*, and *pictures*, in order to inform their minds, and influence their manners (o.)

Thus I have endeavoured to shew, in *what respect* the Law was a *Pædagog* unto *Christ*.

And

(k) Psalm li. 7.

(l) 2 Cor. iii. 6. See Mr. LOCKE in loc.

(m) Ver. 17. (n) Ver. 19.

(o) Vid. STRABO. Geogr. Lib. I. Note—This Author recommends the *fables* of the Poets for the same Purpose. But says PLUTARCH, (Lib. de audiend. Poet.) “ We must not regard the Poets like *Pædagogues* and “ *Lawgivers*, unless there appear to be reason at the “ bottom of what they say.” In which passage, as well as in the Text, we see *Law* and *Pædagogues* compared together.

And the sum of what hath been said is this ; the Law of *Moses* prescribed certain *marks* and *means of distinction* between the people of Israel, and other nations ; it likewise instituted a number of other *Rites* and *Ceremonies*, partly in *condescension* to common prejudices, and partly in *opposition* to popular and prevailing Customs ; and lastly, it seems to have appointed certain *types* and *shadows* of Christ, and of the Christian Dispensation.

I shall conclude this head with an observation of an ancient Christian Writer, viz. that “ Philosophy tutored, or disciplined (*p*) the *Greeks*, as the *Law* did the *Hebrews* for Christ.”

III. I proceed now to the last thing proposed to consideration, viz. The *proper end* and design of this Dispensation ; which is this, *that we might be justified by faith*. For explication of which matter, it must be observed, that the word *justified*, is a law-term, signifying a person’s being acquitted in a *court of justice*, in opposition to his being condemned. Therefore in the Gospel-sense, and construction of the thing, to be justified, is to be in a state of favour and acceptance with God.

But then, what is it for a person to be justified by *faith*? To which I answer.

(1.) It is to be justified by *faith in Christ*,
without

(*p*) ἐπαίδευον. CLEM. Alexand. Strom. Lib. I. and Pædagog. Lib. III.

without being *circumcised after the manner of Moses*, and obliged to keep his Law. This notion results from the *general* scope and design of the Apostle's discourse here; and more particularly from the nature of his apt and elegant allusion in the Text. Because the Pædagogues office expired, when his *ward* was turned over to a master. And so in like manner when the Law had brought men to Christ, it was to leave them there, and have nothing more to do with them, nor they with it. Thus then Christian believers were to be justified by *faith in Christ*, without the *Law of Moses*. *For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness, to every one that believeth* (q). This method of justification by *faith alone*, without the deeds of the Law, St. Paul exemplifies in the case of *Abraham, the father of the faithful*, who was justified without Circumcision, and before he had received it (r).

(2.) It is to be justified by *such* a faith in Christ, as is a virtual and vital principle of religious obedience. This notion is clearly suggested by the Apostle *James*, probably in opposition to the mistakes of some persons in those days, who put a wrong construction upon St. *Paul's* doctrine of justification by faith. For St. *James* instances in the very case of *Abraham*, which St. *Paul* had alledged; as mentioned before. To which he adds, the case of *Rahab*, commended for her *faith*,
which

(q) Rom. x. 4.

(r) Rom. iv. Gal. iii. 6—9.

which saved her from the common destruction of unbelievers (s). These two cases, we may suppose, were urged by the adverse party, as making for their purpose. But the Apostle turns both instances against them, by shewing that the *faith*, by which these ancient Believers were justified, was a virtual and vital principle of practical Religion, productive of good works (t).

Thus we have comprized, in a narrow compass, the perfectly consistent doctrine of these two great Apostles concerning the point of justification. For, to be justified by faith is, according to St. *Paul*, to be justified by faith in Christ, without the *Law of Moses*; and according to St. *James*, it is to be justified by *such* a faith in Christ, as is a virtual and vital principle of religious obedience. Which two things are perfectly consistent with each other; especially if we add, that faith productive of *repentance*, serves instead of *sinless obedience* to the natural and moral Law; the thing which St. *Paul* seems to intend sometimes by the *deeds of the Law* (u). But it is plainly the *Mosaic Law* which he speaks of in the Text (x).

I shall

(s) Heb. xi. 31.

(t) Jam. ii. 21—26.

(u) Rom. iii. 20.

(x) Note—This appears to me a more proper account of the matter, than the notion of a *first*, and a *second justification*, advanced by some Writers. For, as I cannot well conceive of a *first* justification separate from *moral temper*,

I shall now conclude this Discourse with the following Inferences and Reflections.

(1.) The Law of *Moses* and the Gospel of Christ have one and the same divine Original. For, as they have each, distinctly and separately, their proper marks and evidences of a Revelation from God, so they mutually illustrate and confirm each other, as having a relation the one to the other. Therefore the opinion of some ancient Heretics (*y*), was equally false and impious, namely, that “ the God of the *Old Testament* was different “ from the God of the *New*.” For the same God, who spake in times past by *Moses* and the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken to the world by his Son (*z*).

(2.) The Law is *superseded* by the Gospel. For, the *Pædagogues* office ended, where the *Master's* began. Accordingly it follows in the next verse after the Text. *After that faith is come, we are no longer under a School-master, or Pædagogue.* Therefore it was very wrong for any Christians to urge the obligation of Circumcision, and keeping the Law
of

temper, so I think, the instances of *Abraham* and *Rahab*, as stated by the Apostle *James*, can with no propriety be referred to a future judgement; because they are mentioned as facts already past; e. g. “ Was not *Abraham* our father justified by works, when &c?” “ Likewise also, was not *Rahab* the harlot justified by “ works, when &c?”

(*y*) Viz. the *Marcionites*. Vid. IREN, *Advers. Hæres.* Lib. I. Cap. 29.

(*z*) Heb. i. 1, 2.

of *Moses* (a). Nor are those persons any more in the right, who expect the Jewish service to be restored. For this would be *turning again to the weak and beggarly elements*; as the Apostle speaks, wondering that any persons could discover in themselves the least inclination that way (b). In the like terms of surprize says an ancient Christian Writer (c),
 “ How can it but appear a weak and foolish
 “ fancy to suppose, that after the *perfection*
 “ of Christ, there should be any need of a
 “ *Pædagogus*?” This leads me to observe,

(3.) The Christian Dispensation exhibits a *perfect* and compleat *institution* of Religion, fitted for a state of manhood (d). For, as the Gospel of Christ is far more excellent than the Law of *Moses*, in it's spiritual nature and extensive design, so with great propriety it is called (e) *the everlasting Gospel*; because it will not be succeeded, or set aside, as the Jewish Dispensation was, by another, an higher, or a better religious institution. For, if the *Law was a Pædagogus unto Christ*, our heavenly Master, in the divine science of Religion, Christ is not a *Pædagogus* unto any other

(a) Vid. PHILO. Jud. De Migrat. Abraham. Pag. 402. Edit. Paris. Where he seems to speak like a Christian of that order.

(b) Gal. iv. 9.

(c) EPIPHAN. Advers. Hæres. Tom. II. Lib. 3. hæres. 57. five 77. Sec. 28. Edit. Petav.

(d) Chap. iv. 1—7. (e) Rev. xiv. 6.

other Master that is to succeed him in God's school. This equally just and important sentiment, let me leave with you, and desire you to impress it deeply upon your own minds; that so you may never indulge a vain imagination of mending the Religion of the Gospel, as Christ our *Master* hath left and fixed it; but seriously endeavour to mend and reform, guide and govern yourselves by it. The Gospel period was the *time of Reformation*, as the Apostle calls it (*f*). And therefore any attempt to mend Christianity, must be very absurd; for this would, in effect, be reforming Reformation itself; and a Reformation too of God's own making. But, whatever change in the forms of Religion, divine Wisdom may see fit to introduce and establish under any Dispensation, it should be remembered, that *divine institutions* being all perfect in their kind, neither want, nor admit, like *human arts and sciences*, the improvements and refinements of after ages. If this maxim is not allowed, I know not when, or where, the matter will stop; nor what bounds will be set to the inventions of men in the worship and service of God. Therefore, *let us go on unto perfection*, by learning the whole scheme of Christianity, as laid down in the Scriptures of Truth; and so form our sentiments and practice by that sacred rule and standard of Religion alone. For, whatever

showy

(*f*) Heb. ix. 10.

showy ceremonies, and ritual decorations were indulged in the ruder ages of the world, or in the *infant-state* of the Church under the *Jewish* Institution, all rational Christians, as becomes *men*, not regarding the pomp, but the purity of divine Worship, should *put away childish things*, under the more perfect, the more spiritual, and *manly* Dispensation of the Gospel, *the glorious Gospel of the blessed God*. — And now, *to God only wise, be glory, through Christ Jesus, for ever.* Amen.





DISCOURSE IV.

Christianity founded on Demonstration.



I COR. ii. 4, 5.

And my Speech and my Preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power; that your Faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the Power of God.

FROM the *Acts* of the *Apostles* we learn, that St. Paul having spent some time at *Athens*, left that city, and came to *Corinth*, where he continued a year, and six months, teaching the Word of God among them (a). During which time, his labours met with good acceptance, and were attended with great success. For, many of the *Corinthians* bearing, believed, and were baptized (b). And thus

(a) *Acts* xviii. 1, 2. (b) *Ver.* 8.

thus the Christian Interest appears to have been in a flourishing way before St. *Paul* left that place. But after his departure, it seems, the Church of *Corinth* fell into great confusions; and matters were carried so far at last, that a powerful faction was raised against the Apostle himself. Now, these things gave him just occasion to write this Epistle; partly in vindication of his own character, but chiefly to heal their divisions, and reform abuses among them. And, because nothing could so effectually support his authority, and give weight to his admonitions, as the consideration of his acting by a *divine Commission*, this therefore is the thing he insists upon, and reminds them of, in the words before us. Where we may observe,

First. The *Method* which St. *Paul* pursued in propagating the Christian Religion. His *Speech, and his Preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power.*

Secondly. The great *End* and Design of his proceeding in this way. Which was, that the *Faith* of Christians *should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the Power of God.*

These two things I propose to consider in their order; and I judge them worth considering with some attention. May it please God to fix our thoughts upon the Subject,

and impress our minds with it, according to the high nature and importance of it.

First. Let us attend to the *Method*, which St. Paul pursued in propagating the Christian Religion. For the greater clearness and perspicuity, we have it here described two ways, viz. *negatively*, and *positively*.

(I.) To begin with the *negative* view of the question. Let us consider, what was *not* St. Paul's method of propagating the Christian Religion, according to his own account of the matter.—And doubtless his account is just and true ; for, it is given by way of appeal to those very persons who could have easily refuted it, had it been false ; and would certainly have done so upon that supposition, considering how ill some of them stood affected to him at this very time. — Now, the Apostle here expressly says, that his *Speech*, and his *Preaching*, was *not with enticing words of man's wisdom*, or, “ with the persuasible “ reasonings of human philosophy.” And, by this way of speaking, he seems to refer to the methods of instruction, and argumentation in use, among the celebrated Orators and Philosophers of *Greece* ; glancing, perhaps, at some popular declaimer of the opposite faction in the Church of *Corinth*. Therefore *these enticing words of man's wisdom*, have respect, not only to the *language* and *style* of a Discourse, but also to the *artificial* nature of it's composition, as consisting in logical
reason-

reasonings and deductions. And so the Apostle declares, that the method he took in preaching the Gospel, the method upon which he laid the chief stress, and rested the proper proof of Christianity, was not of that sort, but of another kind. It was not St. *Paul's* way of preaching, to trace things back to their first principles, and form his *Demonstration* by a long train of consequences, and then set all off in a florid harangue; or to speak in modern phrase, it was not his way, to tell his hearers a plausible story of the *moral truth* and *reason of things*, considered abstractly in their own nature, or in their mutual relations, habitudes, and respects to each other. This, I say, was not St. *Paul's* method of advancing the Christian Religion. No; whatever service might be done in that way to the cause of truth by any moral Philosopher, the Apostle's manner of teaching, and proving the doctrine of Christ, was of a different nature. He had a clearer and shorter way of *demonstrating* the truth of Christianity; a way more generally useful and convincing to the bulk of mankind, as it was better adapted to common capacities.

It is true, St *Paul* was a man of learning. He was born at *Tarsus, a City in Cilicia* (c), celebrated for a school of Greek philosophy, (d) and where it may be presumed, he read

F 3

the

(c) Acts xxi. 39.

(d) Vid. Strabo. Geog. Lib. 14.

the *Greek* Authors whom he quotes on different occasions (*e*). But afterwards, according to the *custom of the Place*, he travelled for further improvement, and finished his studies at Jerusalem, where he was instructed in Jewish learning, by the great Doctor *Gama-liel* (*f*). And thus he was qualified to reason either with *Jews*, or with *Greeks*, as they came in his way, upon their own principles, and according to their own forms of disputation. In fact, as before he had reasoned exceeding well with the Philosophers at *Athens* (*g*); so afterwards, when he was come to *Corinth*, he *reasoned in the Synagogue every Sabbath-day* (*b*). It must not therefore be imagined, that this great Apostle disclaimed the use of Reason in matters of Religion. For, on the contrary, he reasoned himself upon religious Subjects, as occasion required. And besides, the *Demonstration* which he actually gave of the Truth, and divine Authority of the Gospel, was strictly *rational* proof, as will appear anon; and so the argument supposed the use and exercise of mens Reason, for the right understanding of it, and being convinced by it.

But then—St. *Paul's* method of *demonstrating* in this case, did not consist in that formal process of artificial arguments, which obtained

(*e*) Acts xvii. 28. 1 Cor. xv. 33. Titus i. 12.

(*f*) Acts xxii. 3.

(*g*) Acts xvii. 22—31.

(*b*) Acts xviii. 4.

obtained in the schools of Philosophy. It proceeded upon other principles; yet no less demonstrative in their kind. And for this cause, though he was not wanting in logical science, and other learned accomplishments, he tells the *Corinthians* just before the Text, (i) *When I came unto you, I came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For, I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* Therefore, it is plain, that his *Speech* and his *Preaching* was not with enticing words of man's wisdom.

(II.) Proceed we now to consider the *positive* account, which the Apostle here gives of the method he pursued in propagating the Christian Religion. It was *in, or by, the Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power.* And thus St. Paul made use of *Demonstration*, in preaching and recommending the Gospel of Christ; but then it was Demonstration of a peculiar kind, a sort of *divine Logic*.

St. Paul, I say, made use of Demonstration in this case. He demonstrated the truth, and divine authority of the Gospel, as a Revelation from God with the clearest evidence, and most conclusive argument. He produced such demonstrative proof of the point, as might justly convince all unprejudiced persons, and impartial inquirers after sacred

Truth. If the Apostle terms his method of proving and establishing the Christian Doctrine, the *Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*, by way of distinction from the common forms of disputation ; it was *Demonstration* nevertheless, according to the strict propriety of the original word (*k*). And thus, *Christianity is really founded in argument*, the best argument in the world, even *Demonstration* itself.

But what *kind* of *Demonstration* is this ? It is the *Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*. Now, here two things well require some consideration. (1.) What we are to understand by the *Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*. And (2.) With what propriety this method of proof may be called by the name of a *Demonstration*.

(1.) What are we to understand by the *Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*. We have here, what the Grammarians call *Genetivus instrumenti* ; and so the words import a *Demonstration by the Spirit and Power* ; the Spirit and Power being the means and instrument of the given proof. Accordingly,

By the *Demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, some understand preaching the Gospel by *immediate Inspiration*, under the powerful impulse of the holy Spirit. And it must be

(*k*) ἀποδείξις, this word signifies a *Demonstration* in the way of arguments. Vid. PLATO. Definitiones. M, T. CICERO. Academ. Quæst. Lib. 2.

be acknowledged, that the Apostles of Christ had the *Spirit of truth* promised and given them, to lead them into *all truth* (l); or, *the whole truth*, viz. of the Christian Scheme; particularly those truths, which, by reason of some weak prejudices, they were not able to receive before (m). Sometimes the Apostles and others were under such an extraordinary impulse of the Spirit, as to utter their thoughts in strange languages. Being *filled with the holy Ghost*, they *spoke with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance* (n). But after all, though the Apostles of Christ were divinely inspired teachers of his Religion; their inward Inspiration itself, without some visible proof and evidence of it, could not properly be any Demonstration to others of the truth, and divine authority of their Doctrine. Consequently, something more must be intended by the *Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*. Besides; it does not appear that the Apostles did always preach by immediate impulse. To encourage his unlearned and timorous disciples, that were not used to appear before great men, nor skilled in the common arts and forms of address, Christ promised them present assistance, to enable them to plead *his*, and their own cause in a proper manner, when they were brought before *governours and kings for his*

(l) John xvi. 13,

(m) Ver. 12.

(n) Acts ii. 4.

his sake (o). But this gave them no ground of encouragement to expect the like immediate suggestions in all cases, and upon all other occasions. On the contrary, since they were not always to deliver new Revelations every time they appeared in public, but frequently inculcated the same plain truths and facts over again, the nature of the case, did not require any fresh impulse of the Spirit. To all which may be added, that persons may be assisted by the divine Spirit in composing a premeditated discourse; for doubtless, the Spirit of God is no enemy, but a friend to sacred and serious Meditation. And thus might the Apostle preach the Gospel, under the Spirit's unerring and special guidance, without being supposed always to *speak* by sudden, and immediate suggestion; yea, though they had even studied their discourses before hand, and committed them to writing; otherwise their written *Gospels* and *Epistles*, would be in danger of losing all the credit of their Inspiration, purely on account of their being written. To proceed then.

It hath been supposed (though I cannot say, by persons of any great judgement) that the preaching, with *Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*, signifies, what some are pleased to call, *a powerful way of speaking*, or a zealous, earnest, vehement manner of discoursing upon divine subjects. But I do
not

not see, that this could be a Demonstration of any thing so properly, as the strength of a man's Voice and Lungs. And hard had been the case with respect to St. Paul's ministry, if the success of his labours had depended upon any such talents. For, he seems to have been able to demonstrate very little in that way. His *bodily presence* is said to be *weak*, and his *speech contemptible* (*p*). And in the verse before the Text, he tells the *Corinthians* that he was with them in *weakness*. Besides, as this great Apostle very plainly intimates, that his method of recommending and enforcing the Christian Doctrine was different from the common forms and arts of human eloquence, he must intend something else, than what hath been mentioned, by the *Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*; otherwise the *Antithesis* would be lost, and there would be nothing singular, or peculiar in his way of pleading the cause he had undertaken; nothing but what was common with him to both *Greek* and *Roman* Orators. Indeed, CICERO, that great master and judge of Oratory, is said to have disapproved that clamorous way of declaiming, which was practised by some persons. For, he looked upon it as a low artifice in them, to supply the want of Sense with a redundancy of Sound. On which account, as we are told, he

he (*q*) was wont to compare those ranting speakers unto Cripples, who, being too lame to walk, were obliged to ride. But this was not St. Paul's character. We must therefore fix upon some other meaning of his words under consideration.

By the *Demonstration* then of the Spirit and of Power we may perhaps understand, with some Writers (*r*), the spirit of Prophecy, and the power of Miracles. For, as the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of Prophecy (*s*); so the ancient Prophecies of Christ were one source of divine Evidence to the truth of Christianity, and one topic of the Gospel Demonstration. Accordingly, it was St. Paul's manner and custom, to "reason with the Jews out of the Scriptures, and to prove thereby that Jesus, whom he preached, was the Christ (*t*)."
But this method of proof peculiarly suited the case of the Jews, and Jewish profelytes. And as St. Paul was the Apostle of the Gentiles, he must be supposed to carry with him sufficient credentials of his divine mission, and proper attestations of the divine authority of his Doctrine, even to those persons that were unacquainted with the Scripture Prophecies of the Old Testament. Therefore,

Upon

(*q*) PLUTARC. in Vita. M. T. CICERO.

(*r*) ORIGEN cont. Cels. Lib. I. Pag. 5. Edit. SPENCER. P. D. HUETIUS. Demonst. Evang. Pref. Vol. I. 8vo Edit. Amst. &c.

(*s*) Rev. xix. 10.

(*t*) Acts xvii. 2, 3.

Upon the whole, I incline to think with some others (*u*), that these two words, *the Spirit and Power*, by a common figure of speech, properly signify one and the same thing, in the *Spirit of Power*, or the *Power of the Spirit*; meaning the Spirit of God. Thus, the sentiment here expressed, is the same with what St. Paul says upon another occasion, concerning his own way and method of spreading the Gospel. (*x*) *To make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed; through mighty signs and wonders, by the Power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about to Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ.* And now, it is easy to see, that the *Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power* properly denotes “ a demonstrative
 “ proof of the truth and divine authority of
 “ the Gospel, as a Revelation from God; a-
 “ rising from the miraculous gifts and pow-
 “ ers of the holy Spirit;” which for that end and purpose were conferred upon St. Paul and the other Apostles, when they were *endued with Power from on high* (*y*). According to the promise, and after the example of Christ, *whom God anointed with the holy Ghost, and with Power* (*z*). Thus, *God bare them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with diverse miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghost.*

(*u*) Vid. Dr. J. OWEN. Theolog. Lib. I. Cap. 2. Pag. 6

(*x*) Rom. xv. 18, 19.

(*y*) Luke xxiv, 49.

(*z*) Acts x. 38.

Ghost (a). And this, in short, is the *testimony of God*, which St. Paul declared. And, if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater *(b)*. Upon which principle we may now proceed with greater security to the next thing proposed, viz.

(2.) To consider with what propriety this method of proof may be called by the name of a *Demonstration*. Every one knows, that it is not *mathematical*, but *moral* proof, that is to be expected in a question of this nature; such proof, as may reasonably satisfy any fair and impartial enquirer after Truth. And, as the former kind of evidence carries with it necessary conviction to any competent judge, so the latter lays persons under a moral obligation to admit and receive it. Now, that the Christian Revelation is attended and supported with this sort of *Demonstration*, in consequence of the *miraculous Powers*, which Christ and his Apostles exerted in confirmation of it's Truth, and divine Authority, will manifestly appear upon a little reflection.

But before we proceed to form the argument, it may be proper to mention here a few *Postulata*, which are known and allowed principles of Religion, previous to any positive Revelation.

First. There is one living and true God, infinite in Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, and absolutely perfect in all possible perfection.

Secondly.

(a) Heb. ii. 4.

(b) 1 John v. 9.

Secondly. This one God made, preserves, and governs the world.

Thirdly. Mankind are reasonable intelligent creatures, and the capable subjects of moral government.

These are principles, which no *moral Philosopher* can fairly deny ; and upon this foundation I proceed to advance the following Propositions.

(1.) God *can*, if he please, *commission* certain persons, to reveal his Mind and Will to the world. There is no natural or moral impossibility in the thing. For, as the power of God is infinite, so the occasions of mankind may render a divine Revelation very expedient, and consequently a favour highly worthy of divine Wisdom and Goodness to bestow ; which was the case in fact, when the Gospel was published (c).

(2.) Whenever God sees fit to commission any persons to reveal his Will, he will give them *proper credentials* of their divine mission. For, without such credentials, the design of their mission could not be answered ; but the Wisdom of God always adjusts and proportions the means to the end.

(3.) The highest attestation and the most proper seal of a divine mission, in the common judgement of mankind, are *divine Miracles*. For, upon this principle it is, that even false pretenders to Revelation have commonly

(c) See Discourse on Rom. ii. 14.

monly laid claim to Miracles, as the ground and foundation of their pretensions ; at least when they appealed to *Reason*, and did not support their impostures with an arm of flesh, as *Mahomet* did.

(4.) *Divine Miracles* are *distinguishable* in their nature and circumstances from others ; supposing other Miracles to be wrought by any beings uncommissioned by the Supreme.

(d) For, when God works any Miracles, either immediately by himself, or by other Agents commissioned by him, his Wisdom will take care to give proper *evidence* thereof to the world ; because without such evidence, the Miracles would be wrought in vain. And yet such evidence would be wanting, if there were no certain marks of distinction between divine *Miracles* and others.

(5.) The Miracles of Christ and his Apostles are evidently divine Miracles. For (1.) They are unquestionably *true* in point of fact, by the confession of the most antient opposers of Christianity (e). (2.) They were performed in attestation of a Doctrine most worthy of God, and alike beneficial to mankind. (3.) They are beyond all comparison *astonishing in themselves*, considering their nature and number, their great variety, and long continuance. Moreover, (4). These Miracles are *uncontrolled* by any opposite, or counter-

(d) Concerning this Question see Dr. BENSON'S Life of Christ.

(e) John xi. 47, &c.

counter-Miracles, which one may rationally suppose the Providence of God, who governs both the natural and the moral world, would not have permitted, if these Miracles had not been divine. For, *this* had been leaving mankind under the inevitable necessity of a general deception, in a matter of sacred importance. It is very remarkable, that all the attempts, which were made to rival the Gospel Miracles, met with a signal defeat, to the deserved shame and just reproach of their impious Authors, but to the greater glory and triumph of that heavenly Truth, which they wickedly opposed, and endeavoured to suppress (*f*). And now, (5.) If such Miracles as these are not divine, it is impossible to conceive, what *can* be divine Miracles. But (6.) That they really are divine Miracles, as being performed by a divine Power, we have the concurrent testimony of all the honest and unprejudiced spectators; for they *glorified God* upon this account, *who had given such Power unto men* (*g*). (7.) Upon this view of the case, those persons, who will not allow the Miracles in question to be divine, reduce themselves to the *Absurdity* of supposing, either that God can work no Miracles at all; or, which is the same thing in effect, that he can give no sufficient *proof* of any Miracles

(*f*) See Acts xiii. 11, 12. xix. 13—20.

(*g*) Mat. ix. 18. Compare Mat. xv. 31. Luke viii. 16. &c.

being performed by him. Therefore leaving all unbelievers under this *Dilemma*, I proceed to the conclusion of the argument.

(6.) Christ and his Apostles were persons commissioned by God, to reveal his Mind and Will to the world, in consequence of their miraculous powers and operations. And thus the proof, which St. *Paul*, in particular, produced of the truth and divine authority of the Christian Doctrine, is called by the name of a *Demonstration*, with the greatest strictness, and propriety of language. This is the ground of our Saviour's appeal for the Truth of his own divine Mission. *(b) The works, which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works, that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* And as the Father sent him; so Christ sent his Apostles. *And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following (i).* So true is the account which St. *Paul* here gives of his own Ministry, when he says, *And my Speech, and my Preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power.*

Secondly. It now remains to be considered, what was the great *End* and Design, or the true ground and reason of his proceeding in this way. *That your Faith, says he, should*
not

(b) John v. 36.

(i) Mark xvi. 20.

not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the Power of God. The plain and obvious meaning of which words is *this*, that the Gospel of Christ was published and confirmed in the manner before declared, to the intent, that the Faith of Christians should not depend upon philosophical reasonings, but rest upon a divine Testimony, the *Testimony of God*, mentioned just before. And this was certainly a wise design, as well as an happy consequence of the Gospel Ministration. For, as the Testimony of God is a most firm and solid foundation of our Faith, so it is a clearer and shorter method of conviction than any other. It is a plainer and more striking argument to the bulk of mankind, who stand most in need of instruction, than abstract reasonings, and philosophical disquisitions, which may leave the mind in suspense after all, and bring it to no certain conclusion, at least as to the proper authority of the speaker. Though it hath been supposed, that the design of Miracles is only to command *attention* to the Doctrine delivered; it is certain, that the nature of the Doctrine alone, however excellent in itself, can never prove a positive divine commission in the person who publishes it. The proper seal of such a commission is a divine Testimony; in consequence of which, the Faith of believers does not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the Power of God. And thus, the *end* and the *means* of propagating the

the Christian Doctrine, as described in the Text, exactly tally together, and mutually illustrate each other.

And now, from what hath been said upon this subject, the following Inferences may be deduced.

(1.) From hence we learn the moral Obligation which lies upon all persons, to whom it is fairly proposed, to believe and embrace the Christian Revelation. Because it is attended with divine Evidence and Demonstration. And, as we are subjects of God's moral government, we must be indispensably obliged to enquire after Truth; and consequently to admit all reasonable evidence of Truth; and much more the highest evidence of all. Every man should learn *to think soberly, and as he ought to think* (*k*), not only of himself, but in all other matters of importance. Some persons have confounded *liberty* of thinking, with an *obligation* to think; which are too very different things; the former having a respect to men, the latter to God. Mankind are doubtless under a law of thinking, with relation to their Maker, as well as a law of acting. The one necessarily infers the other; for, without proper principles, there can be no right practice. Infomuch, that some ancient Moralists make right thinking the foundation of Virtue (*l*). Therefore thinking,

(*k*) Rom. xii. 3.

(*l*) Vid. HIEROCL. in Aur. Carm.

thinking, right thinking, must be a duty; and to yield to *Demonstration*, is the most reasonable thing that can be.

Perhaps, some persons in these days, are of the same temper with those, to whom our Saviour said, (*m*) *except ye see signs and wonders, ye will* (or will you) *not believe*. But it is a plain mark of blameable incredulity in any men, to insist upon *seeing* Miracles themselves, and not be satisfied with the credible *testimony* and report of them from others. This demand is quite unreasonable. For, it is requiring greater evidence in this case, than ordinarily satisfies them in other matters of moment—It would destroy the proper nature and design of Miracles, which are *prodigies* out of the usual course of Nature, by making them too common, and converting them into ordinary productions of divine Providence, like the rising and setting of the Sun.—Besides, it is the knowledge of divine Miracles, and not the *manner* of knowing them, which is the proper ground of conviction in this case. For, whether we come to the knowledge of them by the *seeing* of the eye, or by the *bearing* of the ear, the Miracles themselves are equally divine in their own nature, and therefore equally *demonstrative* of a divine mission.—Is it not highly probable then, that those who are not in a candid disposition to *believe*, without *seeing Miracles*, would be lit-

tle better for the fight, if they were indulged with it? Their curiosity might be gratified; but, it may be justly feared, their conscience would be little edified. For, the same wrong turn of mind, which now disposes them to reject reasonable evidence, would be in danger to resist greater light, if it was offered them. Witness the case of many persons, that were eye-witnesses themselves of our Saviour's Miracles, and yet made a shift to evade their convincing force after all. — In a word; as a *Deed*, once regularly signed and sealed, is valid, though the hand that sealed it, is taken off, so a Revelation, once confirmed by divine Miracles, hath that character of Divinity stamp't upon it, which no length of time, or distance of place, can ever obliterate. Therefore, *blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed* (n), upon proper evidence, and rational grounds of conviction; for, all such persons discover in themselves an honest disposition, and great probity of mind.

(2.) Since the Faith of Christian Believers is grounded upon a *divine Testimony*, it is in that respect a *divine Faith*. It *stands* (or subsists) *in* (or by) *not the wisdom of men, but the Power of God*. We must indeed, have recourse to the ordinary means of information, to be satisfied of the truth and certainty of the great facts of the Gospel, upon which
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(n) John xx. 29.

the credit of it's divine Authority depends, and is established. The same method was taken by those persons who lived in the days of Christ and his Apostles. For, they were informed of those facts, not by a fresh Revelation personally made to every single man, but by the report of their own senses, either as *eye*, or as *ear-witnesses*. All were not spectators themselves, but many, that had not seen the Miracles believed them, upon the credible Testimony of others. Now, such Testimony we also have to rely upon, even at this distance of time and place, from the grand scene of action. (If men will not be so unreasonable as to call in question the truth of all ancient Records, and destroy the *faith* of history, to justify their own *unbelief*.) And being once rationally assured this way of the truth of the facts themselves, we believe the Gospel of Christ to be a Revelation from God, upon the foot of it's own divine evidence and authority. Thus, as the Faith of a Christian is grounded upon a divine Testimony, it may, on that account, be properly called a divine Faith, and as such it should have a divine influence and effect upon every Christian Believer.

(3.) From the whole, we learn the great *usefulness* and *importance* of the Christian Revelation. Vain and idle here is the distinction between the *truth* and the *importance* of

a Revelation. For, if the Christian Revelation is true, as hath been *demonstrated*, it must be a matter of the greatest use and importance to mankind. Were the Gospel of Christ a trivial thing, would the all-wise God have ushered it into the world with so much pomp and parade of Miracle; with so many *signs* and *wonders*, and *mighty* deeds? Nay, upon that supposition, would the Father of Mercies have troubled the world with it at all, at the expence of so much precious blood, besides that of his own dear Son, the most precious blood of all, which was shed for the establishment of Christianity from the beginning, and became the *seed of the Church*? But look into the Contents of this glorious Revelation; behold it's blessed tendency, and noble design, to recover mankind from the common Apostacy, and to train them up in a course of religious Virtue, for a glorious Immortality! And who can be so blind as not to see, or so disingenuous as not to acknowledge, that the Gospel of Christ is a matter of the highest moment and importance to the children of men? As such then, let us honour and esteem it; cordially embrace, and sincerely obey it. Let us, with divine assistance, so conduct ourselves under this excellent Dispensation of *Grace and Truth*, as that we may neither be *ashamed of the Gospel of Christ*, nor a shame to it; like many

ny apostate and immoral Christians, in this present licentious age of ungratefully abused light and liberty. Take warning by their example. (o) *Beware, lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own Stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory, both now, and for ever. Amen.*

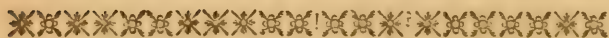
(o) 2 Pet. iii. 17, 18.





DISCOURSE V.

The Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.



MARK iii. 28, 29.

Verily I say unto you, all Sins shall be forgiven unto the Sons of men, and Blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme. But he, that shall blaspheme against the holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal Damnation.

✠✠✠✠✠ T follows in the next Verse, *Be-*
 ✠ I ✠ *cause they said, He hath an unclean*
 ✠ ✠ *spirit.* Which words are a pro-
 ✠✠✠✠✠ per Key to the whole passage go-
 ing before ; and I presume, will point out
 to us the true notion of the *Sin against the*
holy Ghost, as it is commonly called ; though
 to speak with due precision, it should rather
 be called, the *Blasphemy against the holy Ghost*;
 which is the Scripture way of expressing it,
 and

and if closely attended unto, might obviate some mistakes about it.

The truth is, the Sin against the holy Ghost (an expression which I shall use in compliance with common custom for the greater perspicuity ; this Sin, I say) hath in fact occasioned various speculations, and raised many uneasy scruples in the minds of serious Christians ; and not altogether without reason. For, whatever be the nature of this Sin, and where-soever it may formally consist, it is awfully plain and certain, from what our Lord Jesus Christ here expressly affirms of it, that the Sin against the holy Ghost is an *unpardonable Sin*. And this consideration alone is sufficiently alarming, to make all thinking persons anxiously solicitous to know, what that great Sin really is in itself, and when any one may be truly said to have committed the same. An unpardonable Sin ! Good God ! How shocking is the expression ! How amazing and confounding the thought ! No wonder if the very mention of such a thing spreads through a Christian Assembly, and commands the most thoughtful attention from all, that have any value for the favour of God, or any concern for their own felicity, thereon depending. For my own part, I cannot but look upon it with pleasure, as a good token, and a comfortable sign of some remaining seriousness among Christians, to find, how much pious fear and jealousy hath been expressed

pressed upon this head, by many good people. Whether any persons have been so anxious about the matter, from an holy suspicion, that they themselves may have been guilty of the unpardonable sin; or from an earnest desire to avoid the commission of it. In either case; they plainly discovered a just and wise concern for their own salvation.

But in the mean while, it is undoubtedly true, that the Sin against the holy Ghost hath been mistaken, and misunderstood, to the great affliction and disturbance of many serious minds. Infomuch that some persons, who were the furthest off from such a thing, of any people in the world, have been ready to charge themselves with the guilt of that great and grievous Sin. In consequence of which, they have fallen into a gloomy state of deep despondency, and sad despair. For, under the blackness of melancholy, when their minds are disturbed with dark imaginations, and dismal apprehensions about their own spiritual state; in this compassionate case, good men are apt to fancy, they cannot *think too ill* of themselves. And so, if any other Sin, besides that in question, had been pronounced *unpardonable* in the Word of God, they would imagine themselves to have been guilty of that very Sin, whatever it might be. But how little ground there is for any Christian Man or Woman, to make themselves uneasy upon this head, I hope will

will appear with sufficient and satisfactory evidence in the following Discourse, where I propose,

I. To explain the *true Notion*, and the *proper Nature* of the Sin against the *holy Ghost*.

II. To consider the *Difference* between this Sin, and others, as stated in the Text.

III. To enquire into the *Ground* and *Reason* of this Difference.

And then conclude with some Reflections upon the whole.

I. I am to explain the *true Notion*, and the *proper Nature* of the Sin against the *holy Ghost*. And I define it thus, “ The Sin against the *holy Ghost* properly consisted in
 “ blaspheming the Gifts, Powers, and Operations, of the holy Spirit, whereby the
 “ Truth, and divine Authority of the Gospel, as a Revelation from God, was miraculously confirmed.” But, this general notion of the thing may be applied, and considered with a view, to two several and distinct Periods of the Gospel Dispensation; I mean, *first*, the Ministry of Christ, and *afterwards*, the Ministry of his Apostles. For though some Writers (*a*), would confine it to the former period, and others (*b*) to the latter,

(*a*) Archbishop TILLOTSON.

(*b*) Dr. WHITBY.

latter, I think, both may be included in the account, without excluding either, according to the general *Definition* before given of the Sin against the *holy Ghost*.

1. If we consider the thing with a view to the *personal Ministry* of Christ himself, the Sin against the holy Ghost properly consisted in blaspheming the Miracles which our Saviour wrought by the Spirit of God, and maliciously ascribing them to an evil Spirit. This construction of the matter will appear very natural and just, if we duly attend to the connexion and occasion of the words before us. For, Christ told the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, no doubt with an air of holy Resentment at their unreasonable Prejudices and Impiety, *He that shall blaspheme against the holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal Damnation : because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.* And thus you see, it was their saying, *He had an unclean, or evil, spirit*, which gave him occasion to speak of *blaspheming against the holy Ghost*, in such terms of severity. It seems then exceeding plain, that the Scribes and Pharisees were guilty of this unpardonable Sin; for which Christ therefore openly rebuked them, and pronounced their awful doom, by way of terror and warning to others, then present in great numbers.

But in order to set this matter in a further light, let it be observed, that Christ had just before been *casting out a devil*, as we learn from

from the parallel place in St. *Matthew's Gospel*. (c) *Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb; and he healed him; insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.* Upon this we are told, (d) *All the people were amazed* (as well they might, at so sudden and miraculous a cure, whatever the case of the *demoniac* really was) *and said, Is not this the Son of David?* That is, the promised, and long-expected *Messiah*. But in order to destroy the force of this inference, and prevent the notion from spreading and gaining ground among the people, the Pharisees, unable to deny the truth of the Miracle, pretended to believe themselves, and endeavoured to persuade others, that Jesus cast out devils, not by the Spirit and Power of God, but by the power of the Devil. Shocking profaneness and impiety! But so it follows in that same Context. (e) *When the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.* In answer to which groundless and wicked calumny, our Lord proceeds to show the perverseness and absurdity of their pretence, together with the justness of the common people's conclusion from his Miracles aforesaid, viz. that he was the promised *Messiah* (f). He then concludes his Argument in the following remarkable words,
Wherefore

(c) Matt. xii. 22.

(d) Ver. 23.

(e) Ver. 24.

(f) Ver. 25—30.

(g) *Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of Sin and Blasphemy, shall be forgiven unto men ; but the Blasphemy against the holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him but whosoever speaketh against the holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*

And thus, from the series and order of our Lord's Discourse to the *Scribes and Pharisees*, on the occasion referred unto in the Text, it appears, I think, very plainly, that those men were guilty of the Sin against the holy Ghost, by blaspheming the Miracles of Christ, which he wrought *by the Spirit of God*, and ascribing them, not to a divine, but a diabolical power. For, by the *Son of Man*, is undoubtedly meant our Saviour himself, who frequently assumed this humble title. It is his common stile in speaking of himself ; as every reader of his history knows. And so, by *speaking against the Son of Man*, which he represents as a *pardonable Sin*, it is natural to understand those aspersions, and spiteful reflections, which were cast upon his person and character, by his malicious enemies, when they called him the *carpenter*, the *carpenter's son*, a *wine-bibber*, a *friend of publicans and sinners*, and such like invidious names of contempt and reproach. On the
other

other hand, *speaking against* the holy Ghost, may be naturally conceived to denote, reflecting in the manner aforesaid, upon the *Miracles* of Christ. And so this was the Sin, which he pronounced *unpardonable*. *He, that shall blaspheme against the holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal Damnation*, said our Saviour to the *Scribes and Pharisees*; for this very reason, *because they said, He hath an unclean spirit*.

We have now taken one easy and obvious view of the Sin against the holy Ghost, considered with reference to the first period of the Gospel Dispensation, viz. the personal Ministry of Christ himself. But,

2. We may consider the matter with a further view to the Ministry of his Apostles afterwards, which was the *second*, the last, and finishing period of the Gospel Dispensation. And so, “the Sin against the holy Ghost, consisted also in reviling the extraordinary Gifts of the holy Spirit, which were conferred upon the Apostles of Christ, and blaspheming those Miracles which they wrought in his name, after the descent of the holy Ghost upon them.”

The Apostles of Christ had *cast out some* devils in his name (*b*), and performed some other Miracles in his life-time, as he had given them a power to do (*i*). But they were not fully *endued with Power from on high*,
H before

(*b*) Luke x. 17.

(*i*) Matt. x. 1.

before he was gone up into Heaven; and from thence, according to his promise, as a convincing proof both of his *Presence*, and of his *Power* in Heaven, sent down upon them the holy Ghost in it's miraculous Gifts and Powers. So that when our Saviour spake these words in the Text, the *holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (k)*. For the holy Ghost was not properly given to his Apostles, though it was given to himself (*l*), till the famous day of *Pentecost*, next ensuing after Christ's ascension (*m*). It was, *when he ascended on high, that he gave such Gifts unto men (n)*. From that time therefore the dispensation of the *holy Ghost*, under the Ministry of his Apostles, seems to have commenced. And so the *Sin* against the holy Ghost may be reserved, at least in part, to that same period, as it consisted in *blaspheming the miraculous Gifts and Powers of the holy Ghost*, which exerted themselves so conspicuously in the Apostles of Christ, and gave the finishing hand to the Gospel Evidence, and were the last means of conviction, that God would afford to the Jews or other nations.

This view of the unpardonable Sin appears so very natural, that, as I hinted before, some Writers would wholly confine it to this notion. For, when Christ told the *Pharisees*,
here

(*k*) John vii. 39.

(*m*) Acts ii. 4.

(*l*) John iii. 34.

(*n*) Eph. iv. 8.

here in the Text, *Verily I say unto you, All Sins shall be forgiven to the sons of men, and Blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme; but he, that shall blaspheme against the holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal Damnation. Because they said, he hath an unclean spirit.* These words, I say, have been explained to the following sense.

“ Do you suppose that I have an *unclean*
 “ *spirit*? It seems then, my Miracles do not
 “ convince you of my divine Character and
 “ Mission; but though they are wrought by
 “ the Spirit of God, you most absurdly as-
 “ cribe them to the power of the Devil,
 “ who would never be instrumental in con-
 “ firming a Doctrine, which hath a manifest
 “ tendency to subvert and destroy his own
 “ kingdom in the world. Such high indig-
 “ nities I might justly resent; but at present
 “ I shall put up these affronts, and all the
 “ vile and wicked aspersions you cast upon
 “ me. Your case is not quite remediless yet.
 “ There is a further expedient, which shall be
 “ tried upon you in a short time. I will send
 “ down the holy Ghost upon my Apostles,
 “ to endue them with extraordinary Gifts
 “ and Powers, and to enable them to work
 “ many and great Miracles for your convic-
 “ tion, and thereby compleat the divine E-
 “ vidence of the Gospel. But, if you slight
 “ *their* Ministry also, as you do mine, and

“ *blaspheme against the holy Ghost, speaking in*
 “ *them, your Sin will be unpardonable ; be-*
 “ *cause no further means of conviction will*
 “ *be offered you, and consequently you must*
 “ *die in your Sins, and so your blaspheming*
 “ *against the holy Ghost will seal your final*
 “ *condemnation.*”

But, though for a reason I shall mention hereafter, I do not think the unpardonable Sin is to be thus limited and restrained to the dispensation of the holy Ghost, under the Ministry of the Apostles ; I make no doubt but it may properly extend to that period. And to give some further illustration to this point, let me now refer you to the parallel words in St. *Luke's* Gospel also, that I may omit nothing that hath any relation to the Subject in hand. (o) *And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him ; but unto him that blasphemeth against the holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.* It follows, (p) *And when they bring you unto Synagogues, and unto Magistrates and Powers, take ye no thought how, or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say. For the holy Ghost shall teach you in that same hour, what ye ought to say ;* plainly referring to the extraordinary Gifts of the holy Spirit, which should be conferred upon his Apostles. Therefore in the words that have been recited, our Lord seems plainly to mention blaspheming against the
holy

(o) Luke xii. 10.

(p) Ver. 11, 12.

holy Ghost, as *speaking* in the Apostles, and acting by them. Accordingly, in the history of the *Acts of the Apostles*, which relates the transactions of their Ministry, some instances of this blaspheming seem to occur (*q*).

After all; I can see no sufficient reason, why blaspheming the Miracles of our blessed Saviour, which he wrought by the *Spirit of God*, was not as truly and properly the unpardonable Sin of *speaking against the holy Ghost*, as blaspheming the miraculous Gifts of the Apostles, which proceeded from the same holy Spirit. Both these things I humbly conceive, may be fairly brought into the account, according to the general *definition*, or description of this great and heinous Sin, given before, viz. that “ The Sin against the holy
 “ Ghost properly consisted in blaspheming
 “ the Gifts, Powers, and Operations of
 “ the holy Spirit, whereby the truth and divine authority of the Gospel, as a Revelation from God was miraculously confirmed.” By reducing them both to this general principle, the two different accounts of learned men are fully reconciled, and with such variety, a proper unity of sentiment is preserved through the whole. And now, in further confirmation of my hypothesis, let me refer you to the following words of Christ.
 (*r*) *The disciple is not above his Master, nor the*
 H 3 *servant*

(*q*) Acts xiii. 45, 46. xviii. 5, 6.

(*r*) Matt. x. 24, 25.

servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple to be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household; that is, by the same opprobrious and blasphemous name. Which words manifestly refer to the *blaspheming against the holy Ghost*. Therefore, according to our Saviour's account of the matter, it is evident, that persons might commit this unpardonable Sin, both under his own Ministry, and likewise under the Ministry of his Apostles, agreeably to the plan of my Discourse.

But it is argued by Dr. WHITBY (s) (who would limit the Sin against the holy Ghost to the second Period of the Gospel Dispensation, viz. the publick Ministry of Christ's Apostles) that the words of our Saviour *still* run in the *future* tense, whosoever *shall* blaspheme against the *holy Ghost*. From whence he concludes, that our Saviour could not refer to the *present* blasphemy of the Pharisees, but to something else which was then to come, viz. under the *future* Ministry of his Apostles. But here the Dr. happens to be mistaken. For, though the words of our Saviour in the Text run, as he says, in the *future* tense, yet the same thing is expressed in the *present* tense by two other Evangelists, viz.

(s) See his fourth Appendix to his Comment on St. Matthew.

viz. *Matthew* (t) and *Luke* (u). Therefore, the proper conclusion from the different way and manner of expressing the same thing in different Evangelists, seems to be this—That persons might be guilty of the Sin against the holy Ghost, both at the time then *present*, when our Saviour spake the words, and also in *time to come*, under the Ministry of his Apostles.

It is further alledged by the same Writer, that if the Pharisees had been guilty of this blasphemy against the holy Ghost, our Saviour could not afterwards have prayed for *their forgiveness*. To which I answer. All the Pharisees were not guilty of this blasphemy, but only *some* of them, that were present on the occasion referred unto in the Text, and who might have no immediate hand in the Crucifixion of Christ. Therefore, though Christ prayed for his Crucifiers, it follows not that he prayed for these same individual persons; and so they might be guilty of the *unpardonable Sin*.

I have now, according to my first Proposal, endeavoured to explain the *true notion*, and *proper nature*, of the Sin against the holy Ghost. And from what hath been said, it manifestly appears, that no Believer in Jesus Christ, can possibly be guilty of this unpardonable Sin. Therefore, no serious Christian hath the least ground or occasion to give

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himself

(t) Chap. xii. 32.

(u) Chap. xii. 10.

himself any uneasiness at all upon this head. For, does any such person *blaspheme against the holy Ghost*? Does he say that Christ had *an unclean spirit*? Does he call Christ, or his Apostles, *Beelzebub*? Or, does he pretend, that they worked Miracles by a diabolical power? Nothing like it, but quite the reverse of all this. For I am very sure, you reject every such wicked and blasphemous word and thought, with the utmost horror and detestation. And so with this Reflection I conclude my first general head of Discourse. Proceed we then to the next thing proposed, viz.

II. To consider the *difference* between this Sin, and others, as here stated in the Text. *All Sins*, said Christ, *shall be forgiven to the Sons of men, and Blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme. But he that shall blaspheme against the holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal Damnation.* So that the difference between this Sin and others, is very great, particularly in point of remissableness, according to our Saviour's express declaration in the words before us. But that this difference may be the better understood, and more clearly discerned, it is proper to consider both parts of his declaration separately, and distinctly. To begin with the former,

I. *All*

1. *All other particular Sins, and Blasphemies, shall be forgiven unto the Sons of men.* I say, all other *particular* Sins; for so must our Saviour's words be understood. And thus you will perceive, that *obstinate unbelief, final impenitency, and apostacy*, which are a kind of complication of all Sins, belong not to the number, or class of Sins, which shall be forgiven.—But some further caution is here necessary, that we may guard against all mistakes of our Saviour's meaning, in this part of his Declaration. For, doubtless, many persons, who never committed the unpardonable Sin of *blaspheming against the holy Ghost*, may nevertheless be guilty of those crimes, which will make them liable to final condemnation, and so never be forgiven at all. How then are these words of Christ to be understood? *All Sins shall be forgiven unto the Sons of men, and Blasphemies, where-withsoever they shall blaspheme.* For the resolution of which Question, I shall make the following Remarks.

(1.) No Sins whatever will be forgiven unto the Sons of men, without a true repentance. But,

(2.) All other particular Sins, besides that excepted in the Text, *may be forgiven unto the Sons of men*; because they *may be repented of*. And,

(3.) All other Sins *will be actually forgiven,*

en, in particular instances, where persons have really and truly repented of them.

(1.) No Sins whatever will be forgiven unto the Sons of men, without a true repentance. Christ, our great Lord and heavenly Master, commanded, that *Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preached in his Name, among all nations* (x). And so these two things, *Repentance* and *Remission of Sins* are inseparably connected in the Religion of Jesus, our common Saviour and Judge. Accordingly, St. Peter, pursuant to the commission, which he and his fellow Apostles had received from Christ, addressed himself to the Jews in the following terms. (y) *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, &c.* And again, speaking of Christ, he says, (z) *Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince, and a Saviour, for to give Repentance to Israel, and Forgiveness of Sins.* Therefore, in order to qualify ourselves, according to the terms of the Gospel, for the pardon of our Sins, it is necessary that we repent of our Sins, and so forsake them. For, none but penitent sinners, are intitled to pardon by the charter of the Gospel, the *word of Salvation*. Indeed, penitent sinners alone are capable, in the nature of the thing, of obtaining the favour of a just and holy God. And all others, are perempto-

(x) Luke xxiv. 47.

(y) Acts iii. 19.

(z) Acts v. 31.

peremptorily excluded in his Word, from all hopes of pardon and forgiveness. Sinners are told in exprefs terms, that they must *repent*, or all *perish* (a).

This then is the first thing I would observe, and desire you to remember, viz. That no Sins whatever will be forgiven unto the Sons of men, without a true repentance.

(2.) All other particular Sins, besides that excepted in the Text, *may be forgiven* unto the Sons of men, because they *may be repented of*. There is nothing in the nature of these Sins themselves, which can absolutely preclude our repentance, nor consequently obstruct, or prevent our pardon. For the mercy of God in Christ, *whose blood*, without any other ritual expiation, *cleanseth us from all Sin* (b), extendeth to the chief of sinners. And, according to this extensive plan of rich, free, and sovereign grace, I add,

(3.) All other Sins will be *actually* forgiven, in particular instances, where persons have really and truly repented of them. This I take to be the true and proper sense and meaning of our Saviour's words under consideration, viz. that *some* of every class of common sinners, will repent, and so all kinds of sin will be forgiven in one instance or another. And thus in the whole aggregate body of penitent sinners taken together, *all manner of Sins shall be forgiven unto the Sons of men, and Blasphemies*

(a) Luke xiii. 3, 5.

(b) 1 John i. 7.

mies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme; excepting as before excepted. e. g. The blasphemy of Paul (c); the profaneness of Peter (d); the angry resentments of malice and revenge in James and John (e), the two sons of Zebedee, those sons of Thunder; the avarice and extortion of the Publicans, particularly little Zaccheus (f); all sorts of debaucheries and vices of some Corinthians (g); in short, every kind of Sin that can be named, and even those Sins which are not fit to be named, shall be forgiven unto the Sons of men, in numberless instances and examples, where they had repented and reformed, and so were washed, were sanctified, were justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God; as the Apostle says of the Christian converts in the Church of Corinth, that sinful City.

And now, I hope, the *first* part of our Saviour's very solemn Declaration in the Text, appears in it's true light; so as to be liable to no false construction, or dangerous misapplication. Proceed we then to the *second* part.

2. *He, that shall blaspheme against the holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal Damnation.* Or as the word *ἑὸς* imports, is guilty (i. e. in the penalty) of *eternal*

(c) 1 Tim. i. 13.

(d) Matth. xxvi. 74.

(e) Luke ix. 54.

(f) Luke xix. 8.

(g) 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.

nal Damnation. The Sin then of *blaspheming against the holy Ghost*, is not only comparatively, but absolutely unpardonable. It is not merely unpardonable, without a *particular repentance*, as some would soften and mollify the matter (*b*). For, according to that supposition, the Sin against the holy Ghost, would no ways differ from a great many other particular Sins, which will not be pardoned without a particular repentance. But our Lord plainly distinguishes here between this one Sin and all others, in point of forgiveness. And therefore it must be a Sin, which will never be forgiven at all; as all other Sins *may*, upon the sinner's repentance. *He, that shall blaspheme against the holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of* (or subject to) *eternal Damnation.* What words can be plainer, or more strongly expressive of the thing in question? Unless it be the language of St. *Matthew*, in the same case, and upon the same occasion. (*i*) *Whoever speaketh against the holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.*

The learned Dr. LIGHTFOOT seems to suppose, that in this form of expression, our Saviour had a reference to a common notion of the *Jews*, that, what Sins were not forgiven them in their life-time, were expiated at their death. For, having cited several Jewish Writers to that purpose, he concludes
with

(*b*) Dr. HAMMOND.

(*i*) Matt. xii. 32.

with this remark, (k) “ Note this which
 “ Christ contradicts, concerning blaspheming
 “ against the holy Ghost ; it *shall not be for-*
 “ *given*, saith he, *neither in this world, nor*
 “ *in the world to come* ; that is, neither be-
 “ fore death, nor as you dream, by death.”

But if the Jews had any such notion current among them, in our Saviour’s time, as that I have mentioned, I imagine, he would have contradicted it, not only in this particular instance of the Sin against the holy Ghost, but in all others. Therefore I proceed to observe,

The proper import of our Saviour’s words appears to be this, that the Sin of blaspheming against the holy Ghost, would expose men to the judgements of God, both in this life, and the next. *Whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the holy Ghost, it ſhall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come ;* that is to say, he shall be punished for it, both here and hereafter. Which may be supposed to be the case with many unbelieving Jews, who were visited with temporal judgements, as well as subject to *eternal Damnation*.

Such then, and so great is the Difference between this Sin of blaspheming against the holy Ghost, and all other Sins and Blasphemies. That great Sin is unpardonable, though
 the

(k) Heb. & Talmud. Exercit. Op. Vol. II. p. 190.

the rest are pardonable, and may be forgiven. I come now,

III. To inquire into the *Ground* and Reason of this Difference. The question then here to be resolved is this—*Why*, and upon what account, the Sin against the holy Ghost is pronounced unpardonable, and how it comes to be so above all other particular Sins and Blasphemies? Now the plain reason of the thing appears to be this; the Sin of blaspheming against the holy Ghost, is of such a nature, that those who were guilty of it, put themselves out of a capacity to *repent* of it; whereas, all other Sins might be repented of, and so forgiven. This manifestly is the general Ground and Reason of the Difference.

But in order to set this matter in a more particular light, I would observe,

(1.) To blaspheme against the holy Ghost, under the Ministry of Christ, or of his Apostles, could proceed from nothing, but the most incorrigible wickedness, and confirmed impiety. It argued such a profane and profligate temper of mind, as evidently shewed the men, guilty of that Sin, to be past all hopes of recovery. And thus, their own vile and wicked hearts laid them under an incapacity to repent of their Sin; but at the same time, as it was an incapacity of their own procuring, they were justly accountable
for

for all it's evil, and fatal consequences. This affecting view of the case, seems to be suggested by Christ himself. For, immediately after speaking of the Sin against the holy Ghost, he thus proceeds. *(1) Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of Vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh, &c.* And thus, you see here the corrupt *cause* and principle, from which the Sin of blaspheming against the holy Ghost proceeded, viz. a perversely and obstinately wicked heart, which in some measure accounts for it, that the said Sin is unpardonable, because unrepentable.

(2.) To blaspheme against the holy Ghost was contemptuously slighting and rejecting the most powerful means of conviction, that could be offered unto sinful men, in order to bring them to faith and repentance. For, what can God do more, to confirm the great principles of Religion, and persuade men to embrace them, than to work before their eyes the plainest and most undeniable Miracles for that end and purpose? But if, after all, they will deny the divine Power in these Miracles, when they cannot deny the facts themselves, and ascribe them to some other cause (the only shift they can have left to evade

(1) Matt. xii. 33—37.

evade conviction) what other means are there left, or what further methods can be used, more efficacious, to remove their prejudices, and to overcome their obstinacy and perverseness? In this unhappy case, they must unavoidably persist in their wicked opposition to the Truth, and so at last, *die in their Sins*. And thus the Sin against the holy Ghost appears to be an unpardonable Sin, in its *own formal nature*. Because it is a manifest contempt, and therefore an absolute rejection of the most apt and proper means and motives to repentance, which is the necessary condition of pardon. Therefore, when the Jews contradicted St. *Paul*, and *blasphemed*, he told them, that they judged themselves *unworthy of eternal Life* (*m*). And, at another time, on a like occasion, (*n*) *He shook his raiment, and said unto them, your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean.*

3. To blaspheme against the holy Ghost, was a Sin of such an heinous nature in any persons, as justly provoked God's *Spirit* to *strive* no longer with them, but give them up to the wilful obstinacy and hardness of their own hearts. It was a peculiar aggravation of this uncommon Sin, that the Pharisees and others who were guilty of it, not only rejected the divine evidence of the Gospel themselves, but by their blasphemies endeavoured to discredit and destroy it before
I others,

(*m*) Acts xiii. 46.

(*n*) Acts xviii. 6.

others, and so involve them in the same guilt and punishment. Hence that solemn denunciation, (o) *No unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ; for ye shut up the kingdom of Heaven against men : for ye neither go in yourselves, nor suffer them that are entering, to go in.*—If we suppose with some, that in misrepresenting the Miracles of Christ, or of his Apostles, the Pharisees and others spake against their own consciences, with selfish worldly views, this will shew the men in the darkest light, and blackest colours. And, without all question, persons may *speak*, as well as *act*, contrary to their own sentiments and convictions, to serve a turn. Though they cannot properly *believe* against the light and evidence of their own minds, yet they can too easily flight and disregard that evidence both in profession and practice. And this is *unbelief*, in a moral construction, and in the Scripture notion of the thing.—Now, if the Pharisees, or others, who blasphemed against the holy Ghost, were men of this evil temper and spirit, what vile wretches must they have been ! How justly might God give them up to a reprobate mind, and seal their condemnation ; *because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved* (p). St. Paul, as he says of himself, (q) *was before his conversion a Blasphemer, &c.*
but

(o) Mat. xxiii. 13.

(p) 2 Thess. ii. 10.

(q) 1 Tim. i. 13.

but he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly, in unbelief. But, if the Pharisees blasphemed knowingly, wilfully, and maliciously, what mercy could they in reason expect? And yet so much seems to be implied in Christ's *knowing their thoughts* (r), their evil thoughts and intentions.

I have now considered the *Difference* between the Sin against the holy Ghost, and other Sins, as stated in the Text; and likewise shewn the *Ground* and Reason of this Difference; which, in general, is this—That other Sins might be repented of, and so forgiven, but so would not the Sin against the holy Ghost. Because, this Sin could proceed from nothing, but the most incorrigible wickedness, and confirmed impiety; it was contemptuously slighting and rejecting the most powerful means of conviction, that could be offered unto sinful men, in order to bring them to Faith and Repentance; and it was a Sin of such an heinous nature, in any persons, as that it might justly provoke God's Spirit to strive no longer with them, but give them up to the wiful obstinacy and hardness of their own hearts.

I shall now conclude this Subject with the following brief Reflections.

1. The Sons of men are subject to *all Sins*. So much is implied and supposed in these words of the Text. *All Sins shall be forgiven*

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unto

(r) Luke xi. 17.

unto the Sons of men. Now this is a mortifying reflection ; but at the same time an useful caution, to put us upon our guard against all and every Sin. Therefore, *watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*

2. Every person, that *bath never forgiveness*, is liable to *eternal Damnation*. This great and awful truth also is implied in the words before us. So that all unpardoned, and impenitent sinners, are excluded from all hopes of salvation. A consideration, which may justly awaken all secure sinners, and excite them to *flee*, as fast, and as soon as they can, *from the wrath to come, by bringing forth the fruits meet for repentance*; and so get their peace made with God, before they go hence, and are seen no more. And they have all possible encouragement to repent of their Sins, and reform their lives, in the Gospel of Christ, and particularly from his own express declaration, here in the Text, viz. *Verily I say unto you, all Sin shall be forgiven unto the Sons of men.*

3. Though no Christian Believer can be guilty of the Sin against the holy Ghost, as I observed before, yet may by other Sins *grieve the holy Spirit of God (s)*. Therefore, it highly concerns us to *abstain from all appearance of evil, striving against every Sin*, but more especially those Sins which in their
nature

(s) Eph. iv. 30.

nature come nearest, and in their *consequences* are equal to this unpardonable Sin ; I mean, obstinate and practical unbelief, impenitency, and final apostacy, under the Gospel of Christ. *For*, as the Apostle says, (t) *if we sin wilfully* (i. e. so as to persist in a course of Sin) *after we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for Sin.* And so, our guilt must be inexpi-able, and our Sin unpardoable ; which God forbid. Amen.

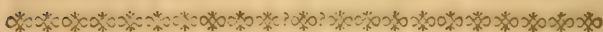
(t) Heb. x. 26.





DISCOURSE VI.

The Rock of the Christian Church.



MATT. xvi. 18.

And I say alſo unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.

OUR Lord Jeſus Chriſt, intending to diſcover himſelf more fully to his twelve Diſciples, otherwiſe named Apoſtles, than he had yet thought proper to do, took an opportunity, as they were travelling alone, to draw from them a free declaration of their ſentiments concerning him. With this view, he asked them firſt in a more diſtant way (*a*), what *other* people ſaid of him, and whom they took him to be. But the Diſciples having made their report, and told him, that ſome ſaid one thing, and ſome another (*b*); Chriſt put the queſtion home to themſelves, and ſaid,

(*a*) Ver. 13.

(*b*) Ver. 14.

said, (c) *But whom say ye that I am? To which Peter replied, (d) Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered, and said unto him, (e) Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in Heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*

In discoursing upon which words, I shall inquire into three things, viz.

I. What is intended by the *Rock*, upon which our Saviour declared he would build his Church.

II. What is implied in *building his Church upon this Rock*.

III. In what respect the *gates of Hell should not prevail against it*.

I. Our first inquiry must be, what is intended by the *Rock* upon which our Saviour declared he would build his Church. *And upon this Rock I will build my Church.* The question here is, What are we to understand by this *Rock*? A great question truly, which hath been long agitated amongst Theological Writers of different parties and persuasions. I shall briefly examine the various opinions of learned men upon this head; and then

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propose,

(c) Ver. 15.

(d) Ver. 16;

(e) Ver. 17, 18, 19.

propose, what to me appears the true and proper notion of the thing.

(1.) By *this Rock*, some understand our Lord *Jesus Christ*. For, they suppose, that Christ pointed at his own person, when he pronounced these words, *Upon this Rock I will build my Church*; in the same manner as when he said, *(f) destroy this Temple*, pointing, as he spake, with his finger at his own Body. And the notion may seem to be favoured by that ancient prophecy of Christ. *(g) Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation*. But none of these expressions come up to the point. For, an *artificial* foundation is a thing distinct from a *Rock*, the natural ground work upon which a building is erected. Besides, the supposition, that Christ pointed with his finger at his own Person in pronouncing the words, wholly depends upon imagination. Therefore to proceed.

(2.) By *this Rock*, others understand St. *Peter* himself. The Popish Party are fond of this notion, for a reason that is no secret. And some Protestant Writers agree with them so far, as to suppose that St. *Peter* is meant by this Rock; but yet explain the matter so, as to give no advantage to the former, by confining it to the *person* of *Peter*, without any regard at all to his successors, whether
real

(f) John ii. 19,

(g) Isa. xxviii. 16.

real or pretended. And indeed, if the person of *St. Peter* alone is concerned in this case, his successors, if he hath any, whoever they are, must be out of the question. But if *St. Peter* was this Rock, he could be so only in his own person; as he laid the first foundation of the Christian Church, both among the Jews and Gentiles. In which view, I think, we are to understand the promise of Christ to *Peter* in the next verse; which I take to be the only proper and personal promise made to him upon this occasion (*b*). We cannot therefore put the same construction upon the former clause of the Text, without a needless tautology. And besides, *building upon a Rock*, supposes a Rock to be the ground-work, different and distinct from any thing that is built upon it. So that if *St. Peter* began to lay the foundation of the Christian Church, as hinted before, he could not properly be the *Rock* upon which that foundation was laid; though he was the first, as it were, that cleared the ground. Moreover, the *City of God* is said to have *twelve foundations*; and in them the names of the *twelve Apostles of the Lamb* (*i*). This is supposed to be an allusion to the custom of persons inscribing their names upon publick buildings by them erected. And thus *Peter* was

(*b*) See WHITBY in loc. LIMBORC in Acts viii. 25. LIGHTFOOT in Acts x. 28. Op. Vol. I. pag. 45.

(*i*) Rev, xxi. 14.

was not the only founder of the Christian Church; nor therefore could our Saviour confer any such singular and peculiar honour upon him above the rest of the Apostles, as would seem to be implied in calling him the *Rock*. And so *Peter* himself could not be intended by this expression. Again; Christian Believers are said, (*k*) *to be built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone*; the great Person in whom all the Revelations of the Old and the New Testament, relating to the Christian Church, unitedly terminate and center. But still we are to seek for the Rock, the firm and solid Rock, upon which the foundation of his Church was to be laid, and rest. To go on then with our inquiry.

(3.) By this Rock, some understand St. *Peter's confession*, viz. *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God* (*l*). And this, to be sure, is the fundamental principle of the Gospel; but then, as it is a principle of *revealed Religion*, it wants something more than it's own intrinsic evidence to *support* it. Therefore we must inquire yet further, and dig a little deeper, before we come at the Rock, whereon this principle itself may be firmly fixed and founded. And, if we can but discover, what it is that sustains this great principle, and so bears all the weight, as it were, of the

(*k*) Eph. ii. 20.(*l*) Ver. 16.

the Gospel fabric; we shall then get to the bottom of this matter, and so find, at last, what we are seeking for. Nor, in my humble opinion, do we need look far to find it; for it lieth so near at hand, that I profess, it is a great surprize to me, whatever it may be to you, that so many learned Writers upon the subject have overlooked it. Only cast your eye back upon the preceding *verse*, and there, if I mistake not, you will see the thing fully explained; when upon St. Peter's openly confessing him to be *Christ, the Son of the living God*. *Jesus answered, and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.* And so I come now,

(4.) To propose, what to me appears, the true and proper notion of the thing in question. By *this Rock* then, upon which Christ declared, that he would *build* his Church, I understand the very same ground that St. Peter's faith and confession was built upon, viz. *the Revelation of God his Father; that is to say, the testimony of the Father, bearing witness, by the divine Miracles of Jesus, that he was Christ, the Son of the living God; as St. Peter had that moment acknowledged him to be.* In order to support this construction of the words, I desire the following arguments may be considered with proper attention,

tention, and weighed in the balance of an impartial judgement.

(1.) The notion, I have advanced, seems naturally to arise from the surrounding *Context*, and the coherence of the words, both with what goes before, and follows after them. For the connected sense of our Saviour's Discourse here, plainly runs thus.

“ *Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona, as thou hast*
 “ *thus acknowledged my true character ; for*
 “ *flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee,*
 “ *but my Father who is in heaven. And I*
 “ *tell thee, that as sure as thy name is Peter,*
 “ *(m) upon this Rock will I build my Church ;*
 “ *upon this very ground and foundation ; up-*
 “ *on the same Revelation and Testimony of*
 “ *my Father, which hath induced thee to*
 “ *believe, and confess, that I am Christ, the*
 “ *Son of the living God, notwithstanding my*
 “ *present mean appearance. In token of*
 “ *this, thou thyself Peter, mean as thou al-*
 “ *so art in thy own person, and destitute of*
 “ *all worldly power and grandeur, shalt be*
 “ *the first planter of the Christian Church,*
 “ *under a divine direction, by opening the*
 “ *door of faith both to Jews and Gentiles.”*

(2.) This notion is very *consonant* and agreeable to what our Lord said upon *other occasions*, concerning the way and method whereby

(m) *As sure as thy name is Peter:* This seems to be Christ's meaning, when he said, *Thou art Peter.* Compare 1 Kings xix, 2. LXX.

whereby his Church should be built up, and established in the world. Thus, v. g. he told the Jews, who followed him, not as they ought to have done, because they had *seen the Miracle*, but because they did *eat of the loaves, and were filled* (n); *No man can come unto me, except the Father, who sent me, draw him*. i. e. By the divine evidence of his having sent Christ, particularly by the *works, which the Father had given him to perform* (o). It is, as if Christ had said—"By
 " duly attending to the bright evidence of
 " my divine Character and Mission, arising
 " from the miraculous *works* which bear
 " witness of me, that the Father hath sent me,
 " that persons must become my true Disci-
 " ples, and not from any worldly motives
 " or considerations whatsoever. This is to
 " be taught of God, and to learn of the Fa-
 " ther (p)."

(3.) This notion agrees with *matter of fact*. For, if we consider in what way, and by what means, the Church of Christ was first founded and established, we shall find it was not by *flesh and blood*; it was not by an arm of flesh, or by human policy and power, but by methods purely spiritual and divine; particularly, by *mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God* (q). Thus, *Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved*
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(n) John vi. 26, 44.

(o) John v. 36.

(p) John vi. 45.

(q) Rom. xv. 19.

of God, by miracles, and wonders, and signs which God did by him (r). In this manner did the Father reveal him to be Christ, the Son of the living God; and by these means, was the Church of Christ established upon a firm foundation. So just and proper is the Apostle's account of the first establishment of the Christian Religion. (s) *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, (or fleshly) but mighty through God (i. e. spiritual and divine) casting down imaginations, and every high thing, which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*; that is to say, by the divine evidence and authority of the Gospel, that *armour of light*, which baffled all the powers of darkness.

(4.) This notion is the more probable, as it appears to be levelled against a *vulgar error* of the Jews, concerning the nature of the Messiah's kingdom. And so one may discern a particular reason, why Christ might chuse to suggest such a sentiment to his Disciples, and express it also with some degree of vehemence. If the kingdom of Christ was to have been a *kingdom of this world*, as the Jews in our Saviour's time imagined, then it would have been established by human force, that is, by *flesh and blood*. But by saying, that his Church should be built upon a different foundation, in the way that hath been described, he

(r) Acts ii. 22.

(s) 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

he gave his Disciples a plain and seasonable hint, that his kingdom was to be of a spiritual nature, because it was to be erected by spiritual means and methods alone; agreeably to that royal Prophecy, (t) *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power* (u). A plain intimation, that the kingdom of the Messiah should be established by proper methods of conviction and persuasion.

(5.) This notion is agreeable to the *nature* and *reason* of the thing. For, by way of allusion to the meaning of St. Peter's name, the foundation of his faith, as before explained, is very aptly compared to a *Rock*, for solidity, strength, and firmness. Because the testimony of the *Father*, yields such clear and convincing evidence, that Jesus is *Christ, the Son of the living God*, as is a most firm, solid, and sure foundation of a Christian's faith. Our faith thus founded, rests upon the *Rock of ages*. It does *not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God* (x). And how can it stand upon a better foundation? Or how is it conceivable, that our blessed Saviour could have chosen more proper terms, in the whole compass of human language, than he hath made use of in the present case, to express and describe the bright evidence, and substantial proof of his own divine character
and

(t) Psal. cx. 3.

(u) Vid. S. BOCHART Op. Vol. I. p. 907. and J. CLERIC, in loc.

(x) I Cor. ii. 5.

and mission? In the comparison of a Rock; thus applied, I seem to behold a most striking beauty, and propriety.

So much then for our *first* Inquiry, viz. What is intended by the *Rock*, upon which our Saviour declared he would build his Church.

II. We are next to consider, what is implied in *building his Church* upon this Rock. Now, as the building of an edifice properly denotes it's *first erection*, so Christ's building his Church upon the Rock aforesaid, seems to have an immediate respect to the first establishment of Christianity in the world. And thus it implies, that the Church of Christ should be raised, and his Religion propagated in the earth from the beginning, by ways and means purely spiritual and divine. By the virtue and force of it's own divine evidence and authority, as a Revelation from God, the Gospel should prevail and triumph over all opposition. And thus the Christian Church should be firmly established, not only *without*, but even *against* all secular power, and worldly interest. Accordingly, the truth of this declaration was conspicuously verified by the corresponding event in the order of divine Providence. By illustrious signs and wonders, and various gifts of the holy Ghost, superadded to it's own intrinsic excellency, every way worthy of God, and suitable to
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the condition of men, the Christian Revelation made it's way into the world, and quickly spread itself through all nations. *So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed (y)*. Prevailed over the prejudices, and passions, and private interests of mankind. For, innumerable converts were made to Christ, *begotten by the word of Truth (z)*, like drops of *Dew from the womb of the morning*, at the first dawn of the Gospel, in the very infancy and youth of the Christian Church (a). And thus it manifestly appears, that the Church of Christ, agreeably to his own declaration here in the Text, was built upon the Rock of that divine evidence and authority, which attended and supported the Gospel as a Revelation from God. Proceed we then to enquire,

III. In what respect the *gates of Hell should not prevail against it*. This expression, the *gates of Hell*, admits of different constructions; but in no assignable sense should the gates of Hell prevail against the Church of Christ.

1. The *gates of Hell*, may denote the *powers of darkness*, with all their instruments and agents. As the Church of Christ is compared to a Citadel or Tower built upon a strong Rock, so it is represented as having the adverse powers of Hell to resist and withstand.

(y) Acts xix. 20.

(z) Jam. i. 18.

(a) See Psal. cx. 3.

The gates of the City were anciently a place of consultation, as well as a place of strength and defence. And so the gates of Hell may signify both the subtle contrivances, and the violent assaults of the Church's infernal enemies. This opposition St. Paul refers unto in the following words; *(b) We wrestle not against flesh and blood* (i. e. against men like ourselves) *but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* Now,

In what respect, may we suppose, our Lord intended to say, that the gates of Hell, considered under this notion, should not prevail against his Church? To which I answer. It does not appear, that Christ meant to signify by this expression, the *perpetual visibility* of his Church, much less her *infallibility*; as some, who have little pretensions to it themselves, earnestly contend. But, as the building of his Church seems properly to respect it's first establishment in the world, according to a former hint, so Christ may be understood to foretel, that his Church should be established in the earth by the power of Heaven, maugre all the opposition that the power and policy of Hell could raise against it; which accordingly came to pass. In prospect of this great and happy event, he told his disciples, *(c) I beheld Satan as lightning fall from*

(b) Eph. vi. 12.

(c) Luke x. 18.

from Heaven. Instead of confounding the evidence, or baffling the force, and preventing the success of the Gospel, the kingdom of Satan was terribly shaken, and received a mortal blow, by the glorious light of the Christian Revelation. In this respect it is certainly true, that the gates of Hell did not prevail against the Church of Christ.—If the words have any reference or relation to the state of the Christian Church in after ages, all that can be justly inferred from thence, is only this, that however the enemies of God's Church may oppose, or persecute, and oppress it for a time, they shall not finally prevail against it, but truth at last shall reign triumphant over all opposition whatever.

2. The *gates of Hell*, or *Hades*, may signify more particularly *death* itself. Death is the door, as it were, or entrance into the invisible world. And the expression before us is so commonly used in this sense by other Writers, that it may be very well included, though without excluding the former notion. For death is that terrible engine, which the enemies of the Christian Church made use of to oppose, and suppress it from the beginning. Hence that needful and seasonable caution, (*d*) *And fear not them who kill the body, &c.* The question then at last comes to this, viz. In what respect *death* should not

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prevail

(*d*) Matt. x. 28.

prevail against the Church of Christ? To which the proper answer seems to be as follows.

(1.) Death should not prevail against the *head* of his Church, meaning Christ himself. For, as the fear of death did not deter him from doing his Father's Will, in *giving his life a ransom* for his Church, so, though he was to *be killed*, he would *rise again the third day*, as he told his disciples upon this occasion (e). And accordingly so he did. Thus was he *declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead* (f). Therefore, so far was death, in his instance, from prevailing against the Church of Christ (as his enemies proposed, and fondly expected) as that, on the contrary, it proved a powerful mean of establishing his Church upon a more firm and solid foundation, by adding more light and lustre to the Father's testimony of his divine character and mission.

(2.) Death should not prevail against the *body* of his Church; that is to say, Christian Believers. For, Christ *abolished death, and brought life and immortality, to light through the Gospel* (g). Thus, *through death, our great Redeemer destroyed (or subdued) him, that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; that he might deliver those (from their slavish, and enslaving fears) who, through fear of death, were*
all

(e) Ver. 21.

(f) Rom. i. 4.

(g) 2 Tim. i. 10.

all their life-time subject unto bondage (b). Not to mention here, what the Jewish Writers say about the *angel of death*; it is more to the purpose to observe, that the Devil was not only the instrument of introducing death into the world by the first temptation; (*i*) but he likewise made use of it's terrors to intangle men in the bondage of superstition and vice. But this *sovereignty of death*, exercised by the grand seducer, Christ destroyed by introducing the bright hopes of a blessed immortality. For, what was it, but this blessed hope, which carried the primitive Christians so bravely through all their sufferings, as that *the blood of the Martyrs* was said to be the *seed of the Church*, and so increased instead of lessening or diminishing the number of Christian converts (*k*). And thus, you see, that even death itself, the *most terrible of all terrible things (l)*, was not able to prevail against the Church of Christ.

And now, to *apply* what hath been said upon “our Saviour’s *declaration* in the Text, “concerning the firm establishment of his “Church in the world,” in a few Reflections.

(1.) From hence we may infer, that Christianity is no human invention, but a divine

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(b) Heb. ii. 14, 15.

(i) See Mr. PEIRCE in loc.

(k) Vid. TERTULLIAN Apol. sub fin.

(l) Vid. ARISTOT. Ethic. Nicom. Lib. III. Cap. 6:

institution. *Flesh and blood hath not revealed*, contrived, or proposed it to the world, but *our Father in heaven*; upon the foot of whose irrefragable testimony, the divine authority of Christ and his Gospel firmly stands, as upon an impregnable Rock.

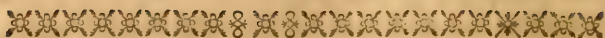
(2.) We here may see, upon what *principle* it is, that we must be Christians; namely, from a full conviction of the truth and divine authority of the Christian Revelation. For this is the Rock upon which the Church of Christ was to be built; this is the ground upon which it was first erected; and so this is the foundation, upon which all persons in every age are to be raised as *living stones into an holy temple to the Lord*. And should Christianity ever come to be fixed upon a different footing, so as to rest upon human authority, and depend upon civil sanctions altogether, for it's support and influence, the Christian Church would be removed from it's proper basis, and no longer stand upon it's own Rock. Therefore, let others lay what stress they please, upon human Forms and Systems of Religion, it is wisdom, not weakness, it is reason, not prejudice, to be Christians, upon scripture evidence, and a scripture bottom.

(3.) We may further learn from what hath been said, that those *claims* are groundless, which have been built upon the Text, by persons pretending to be the successors of
St,

St. *Peter*, or of the other Apostles. For none of them now appear to be the Rock, upon which Christ would build his Church ; but only the divine evidence and authority of the Gospel, as a Revelation from God. And as this glorious evidence is a public light, held forth in common to all persons, without being confined to any one particular set of men ; therefore people of different parties and persuasions, in less matters, may all be true Christians, by believing in Christ, upon the foot of his own divine authority, as the *Son of God, and the Saviour of the world*. For, (says the Apostle (m) speaking to the different denominations of Christian Believers in his days) *ye are all the children of God by faith, in Christ Jesus*. And thus, being the children of God, all we are bretheren ; and therefore we should love as bretheren. Now unto God, and our Father, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

(m) Gal. iii. 26.





A P P E N D I X.

HAVING just hinted, what my notion is, of *the keys of the kingdom of Heaven*, which Christ promised to give unto *Peter*, it may be proper further to explain and confirm it by a few Remarks.

(1.) By *the kingdom of Heaven*, it seems natural to understand the *Church* of Christ, mentioned in the preceding Verse; that is, *the kingdom of God* under the Gospel, as the Christian dispensation is commonly called. Matt. iii. 1—3. xi. 12. xiii. Dan. ii. 44. vii. 13, 14, &c.

(2.) As to the *keys* of this kingdom, Christ himself will be his own interpreter, if we attend to what he said upon some other occasions. See Matth. xxiii. 13. and Luke xi. 52. By comparing which passages together, it appears, that in our Saviour's sense and meaning of the words, the *keys of the kingdom of Heaven*, denote the keys of *knowledge*, or doctrine and instruction. And so these keys were given unto *Peter*, in a special manner, as he was first to *open* the Christian Church, after our Lord's ascension, both among the Jews and Gentiles. See Acts ii. 14—41. x. 34—48. This explains the remaining part of Christ's promise to him, viz. And *whatsoever*

ever thou shalt bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven. For,

(3.) *Binding and loosing*, in Scripture phrase, and Jewish language, imports the tying of men unto, and discharging them from such and such observances. See Matt. xxiii. 4. LIGHTFOOT, Vol. I. page 237. and Vol. II. page 205. And so, when in the case of *Cornelius*, and others with him (the instance last referred unto) *Peter* admitted persons into the Christian Church upon their *believing* in Christ, without being *circumcised*; he might be said to *loose* them from the latter, and to *bind* them to the former, as a necessary qualification for their being members of God's kingdom, under the gracious dispensation of the Gospel. And since he acted in that affair agreeably to the plain *significations* of God's Will, declared by the *vision of the sheet*, and the impartment of the *holy Ghost*; therefore, what he thus *bound on Earth*, was *bound in Heaven*, and what he thus *loosed on Earth*, was *loosed in Heaven*. And this accordingly was the apology, which *Peter* made for himself, when *they that were of the circumcision, contended with him*. Pleading a divine warrant for what he had done in this case, he said, *What was I, that I could withstand God?* Acts xi. 2, 17. Compare Acts xv. 7—9. This, by the way, shews, that *Peter* was of the same opinion with

Paul

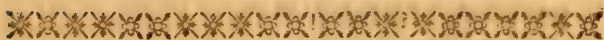
Paul about the *liberty of the Gentiles*. And so, *St. Peter's* blameable conduct, for which *St. Paul* found fault with him, Gal. ii. 11, &c. was an error of infirmity (that is, of *fear*) not of judgement. See TAYLOR on Rom. xvi. 25.

(4.) This promise of *binding and loosing* in connexion with the *keys of the kingdom of Heaven*, was directed singly to *Peter* alone. Therefore, what Christ said upon another occasion, Matth. xviii. 18. both to *Peter* and the rest of the Apostles, about *binding and loosing*, seems to be spoken with a different view. For, the same thing appears to be intended in that place, and John xx. 23. *Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, &c.* And so the power of *binding and loosing*, given to all the Apostles in common, was a power to *remit* and *retain* sins; whereby may be understood a power to *remove*, and to *inflict diseases*. For to *bind* signifies some times to *inflict diseases*; and to *loose*, to *cure them*. See Luke xiii. 12, 16. and J. CLERIC. in John xx. 23. But, whatever that power was, it seems to have been peculiar to the age of Miracles. For, when Christ conferred it on his Apostles, *he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the holy Ghost.* Ver. 22.






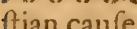
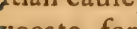
DISCOURSE VII.

St. Paul a Captive to Christ.



2 COR. ii. 14—16.

Now thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For, we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ; in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one, we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other, the savour of life unto life: and who is sufficient for these things?


 S these are the words of the great

 A  St. Paul, who preached the Faith

 which once he destroyed (a), and of

 an open active enemy to the Christian
 cause, became a public and zealous ad-
 vocate for it, so they may be conceived to
 have a more direct and immediate reference
 to his own particular character and case. Ne-
 vertheless,

(a) Gal. i. 23.

vertheless, they will suggest useful matter of reflection also to others, both Ministers and People. For, we may lay it down for a general truth, which holds good at all times, that,

“ It is a just ground and occasion of
 “ thanksgiving unto God, when he *trium-*
 “ *pheth* over any of his servants in Christ,
 “ and maketh manifest the favour of his
 “ knowledge by them in every place, where-
 “ ever they go.”

In discoursing upon which Observation I purpose,

First. To consider the *subject-matter*, here mentioned, of thanksgiving unto God.

Secondly. To shew, that it is a *just ground* and occasion of thanksgiving unto him.

And then conclude with some Inferences and Reflections. In pursuance of which method,

First. I am to consider the *subject-matter*, here mentioned, of thanksgiving unto God. Now, this is God's *triumphing* over any of his servants in Christ, and making manifest the sweet favour of his knowledge by them, in every place. In which account are included two things, which require and deserve a distinct consideration; viz. the *Triumph* spoken of, and the *consequence*, fruit and effect, of that same Triumph.

I. Let

I. Let us attend a while, to the *Triumph* itself. *Now thanks be unto God*, says the Apostle, *who always causeth us to triumph in Christ*; as we improperly read the words, according to our common translation. Nor can the original Text be so rendered without an *Hebraism* (*b*), for which there is no necessity, or occasion at all in this place (as well as in many others (*c*)) because in propriety of speech, the language of St. Paul, not only admits, but requires a different sense and construction. For the Greek word *ὑπερβύουσι* which we render, *causeth us to triumph*, properly signifies to *triumph over*, or to lead in triumph (*d*); as our Translators themselves have rightly rendered it in another place (*e*). And so the Apostle's true meaning is plainly *this*; *Now thanks be unto God, who always triumpheth over us in Christ*; leading us about in Triumph, as it were in solemn proceßion. This yields a most congruous and beautiful sense of his words. And in order to display the force of his fine sentiment, in it's full compass and extent, let it be observed, that when St. Paul represents himself and others, as being led about in Triumph, like so many captives, by the prevailing power and efficacy of Gospel *grace and truth*,

(*b*) In Conjug. *Hipbil.*

(*c*) Vid. HUTCHENS. Not. in Xenoph. *Cyropæd.*

(*d*) Vid. PLUTARC. in *Romul.* & Chosius. in Phot. Biblioth.

(*e*) Col. ii. 15.

truth, his words naturally imply and suggest *three* things, worthy of particular notice and attention; namely, a *Contest*, a *Victory*, and an *open shew* of this *Victory*.

(1.) The notion of a *Triumph* supposes a foregoing *Contest* between contending parties. Who the parties engaged against one another, in the present case are, I need not tell you; for you can easily tell yourselves, if you consider that the *Triumph*, spoken of in the Text, is a divine *Triumph* over some of the human race, who early commenced hostilities against God, under the banner of the grand Apostate. And this war with Heaven, hath been carried on under various forms from age to age. As God is the Maker, he is likewise the rightful Governor of the world; and mankind, as rational and moral agents, are his lawful subjects. But by revolting from his government, they have raised an unnatural rebellion in the kingdom of God, to their own great disadvantage, and high disgrace. In compassion to their ruined state, and lost condition, it hath pleased the Father of Mercies, to make use of proper means, to recover mankind from the common Apostacy, and so bring them back to their duty and their happiness at once. But these divine methods, to make them holy and happy, the children of men are sadly prone to resist, and oppose with equal ingratitude and folly. And so here lies
the

the quarrel; and this is the present state of the controversy between God and men.

Strange indeed, that reasonable intelligent creatures, should be so very perverse, so very blind, and backward to their own true interest, and highest felicity, as to prefer the ignominious and fatal slavery of sin, to the honourable and most beneficial service of God! But so we find, it often is in fact. The sons of men are not only prone to rebel against the government of God, but likewise make great opposition to the wise and gracious methods of their own recovery, from a state of sin and perdition. Even the *kings of the earth*, as well as their subjects, sometimes *set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed*, or Christ (*f*). One would imagine, their own natural sense and reason might teach them better, and make them wiser, if they would attend to the impartial dictates of their own judgement and conscience. For, if they have lost their innocence, they have not lost their understandings, any more than the fallen angels; and though they are *sinners*, they are *men* still, not mere stocks and stones. But then, alas, their carnal appetites and passions rebel against their Reason, and prove too strong for their conviction. And thus being *caught in the snare of the Devil*, they suffer themselves to be made his *captives* (*g*). For, *every man*

(*f*) Psal. xi. 2;

(*g*) 2 Tim. ii. 26.

man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust (like a fish at the sight of the bait) and enticed (or ensnared). Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished (and come to it's full growth) bringeth forth death (b).

In relation to St. Paul himself, it must be acknowledged, that he did not oppose the light of his own Reason and Conscience, in the opposition he made to the Gospel before the time of his Conversion. For, he *did it ignorantly in unbelief (i)*. Nevertheless, his opposition to God in that case, was very great and notorious. For, as he told king Agrippa, *(k) I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut*

(b) Jam. i. 14, 15. The violent opposition which the lusts of men make to the dictates of right Reason, and to the law of their nature, which is the law of God, St. Paul hath expressed and described in very strong terms. Rom. vii. 18—23. But, whether he speaks there of *himself*, or only personates the character of *another*, is a question. The description, however, is hardly suitable to his own case, even in his unconverted state. For he had always *lived in all good conscience before God*. Acts xxiii. 1. Therefore he had followed his present light, and acted conformably to the sense and *law of his mind*. But then his fault was, that he had not always taken proper care to inform his mind aright, suffering himself to be too much biassed with the prejudices of his Education unexamined. And hence proceeded his violent opposition to the Christian Cause and Church.

(i) 1 Tim. i. 13.

(k) Acts xxvi. 9—11.

I shut up in Prison, having received authority from the chief-priests ; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange Cities. What a flagrant instance was here of opposition to God ! Perhaps, there are few examples like it, or equal to it ; though we are all too much bent upon opposing the wise measures of the divine government, in one way or another. For, there are lusts which war in your members ; fleshly lusts which war against the soul (l), and thereby rebel against the sovereignty of God, who hath erected his throne, and written his law in every man's heart and conscience. This rebellion is then the most unnatural and outrageous, when any persons, not content with privately opposing the Will and Authority of God themselves, make a public opposition to his sacred cause, and interest in the world ; as St. Paul himself had signally done in the former part of his life ; such a behaviour is with the greatest propriety termed, (m) fighting against God.

(2.) Besides a foregoing Contest, the notion of a Triumph, supposes further, a *Victory* gained on one side. And, in the present case, the victorious party is God, who triumphs over his opposers, when he hath

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made

(l) Jam. iv, 1. 1 Pet. ii, 11. (m) Acts v, 39. xxiii, 9.

made a conquest of them, and subdued them to himself in any instance. Sometimes the rash and impious opposers of God's wise and righteous government, are prevailed upon, to lay aside their opposition, and yield obedience to his supreme Authority. Convinced of their error, ashamed of their folly, and afraid of the danger, that must unavoidably attend a continued enmity with Almighty God, they throw down their arms of hostility, and surrender themselves his willing captives; or, as it were, prisoners at discretion, saying as St. Paul did, trembling at his conversion, *(n)* *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Thus, some of the greatest rebels against God, have at last, become very good and happy subjects of his holy kingdom. Behold here, in the instance before us, a hot, raging, bloody Persecutor, turned into a most faithful, and zealous Preacher of the Gospel! And in like manner, hath many a grievous Sinner been converted into a great and glorious Saint. Such is the mighty power, and such the prevailing force of all-conquering Truth! How hath it *opened their eyes, and turned men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ* *(o)*! What numbers of people, who were in time past, the slaves of sin, became

(n) Acts ix. 6.

(o) Acts xxvi. 18.

came afterwards the *servants of righteousness*; having their ignorance cured, their mistakes rectified, and their vices reformed! Nay, many persons have not only been reclaimed from the error of their ways, and devoted themselves to a life of christian piety and virtue, but moreover have exerted all their power, and used their best endeavours to persuade others to embrace it. Lo, here then, a clear victory gained over all the prejudices and passions, and private interests of men, who in many cases, have *denied themselves, taken up their cross* (like persons going forth to execution) and *left all to follow Christ*, and espouse his blessed cause in the world; first, his humble and submissive captives, and then his brave and noble champions; although before they had been his ignorant or malicious opposers! A most remarkable and illustrious instance of this kind was St. Paul himself, when he *preached the faith which once he destroyed* (p).

But, so much for the *Contest* and the *Victory* spoken of, or referred to, in the Text. I now proceed to observe,

(3.) The notion of a Triumph includes, and properly denotes, a *public and open shew of Victory*. Thus, speaking of Christ, the Apostle says, (q) *having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly,*

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triumphing

(p) Gal. i. 23.

(q) Col. ii. 15.

triumphing over them (r). And this is the important sentiment no less plainly delivered, than properly and elegantly expressed in the words before us. For, God made an *open shew* of the Victory he had won over St. Paul, and others, by *leading them about in Triumph*, from place to place, and exposing them to the public view of all the world, as the *trophies* of victorious Grace and Truth. St. Paul himself was a most eminent and remarkable instance of this kind. The prevailing power of the Gospel did most illustriously appear in *him*, who became as zealous a Preacher, as before he had been a Persecutor of the Christian Faith. *Great is Truth, and will prevail.* And greatly it does prevail, when, as it did in his case, it bears down the strongest prejudices and passions, and makes every thing give way to it's bright and glaring evidence; like a flash of lightening, or that glorious light from Heaven which shone around St. Paul, at the time of his happy conversion (s). *So mighty it is, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,*

(r) *ὑποκαταβύσσας αὐτοὺς.* i. e. *triumphing over them.* This, as hath been observed before, is a right translation; according to which we have taken the liberty of reforming our English Reading, in the words of the Text. See Mr. PEIRCE in loc.

(s) ACTS ix. 3.

God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (t). In this advantageous light does the divine evidence, power, and energy of the Gospel, appear to the world, when some of the *chief of Sinners* have their heads so enlightened, and their hearts so changed by it, as to be converted into the chief of Saints, and even *Martyrs* for the glorious cause of Christ.

All such persons are shining trophies of the Gospel, wherever they go. God *leads them about in Triumph*, through city and country, as public monuments of the single conquest he hath gained over them. And thus, he *triumpheth over them in Christ*, or by Christ, and his Gospel, *which is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth* (u).

Having considered the *Triumph* spoken of in the Text,

II. Let me now crave your attention a while to the *consequence*, fruit and effect of this divine Triumph, as we have it described by the Apostle in the following words. *And maketh manifest the favour of his knowledge by us, in every place*. But, what is meant by the *favour of his knowledge*? And, how is it *made manifest* by any persons in consequence of the divine Triumph aforesaid? These two things I shall briefly consider.

(1.) What we are to understand by the *favour of his knowledge*? Now, in this expression,

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(t) 2 Cor. x. 5.

(u) Rom. i. 16.

pression, St. *Paul* seems to continue his allusion to a *Roman Triumph*. In the time of a public Triumph, all the Temples were open, and full of *garlands and perfumes* (u). In like manner, the Temple, or Church of God is enriched and perfumed with the sweet odour of divine knowledge by the Christian Revelation, or the Gospel of Christ. For, this expression, the *savour of his knowledge* (or the knowledge of him) refers to the knowledge of *Christ*, mentioned just before; the same thing being expressed afterwards (x) by *the sweet savour of Christ*. And in this way of speaking, the Apostle may be thought to glance at the *name* of Christ, which signifies *anointed*. So that it may be properly said of him, that his *name is as ointment poured forth* (y). Therefore, this knowledge of Christ may include the knowledge of all his offices, as the anointed *Prophet, Priest, and King*, in his Church, by the constitution and appointment of God, his Father. For, *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Ghost, and with power* (z). And thus, the knowledge of Christ, here intended, comprehends the whole Christian Revelation, which yields a most pleasant and grateful odour to all persons, who have their *senses rightly exercised to discern spiritual things*.

(2.) How

(u) PLUTARCH. in Paul. *Æmyl.* (x) Ver. 15.

(y) Cant. i. 3. (z) Acts x. 38.

(2.) How is this sweet and fragrant knowledge of Christ *made manifest*, in consequence of the divine Triumph aforesaid? To which I answer. Besides the *unction* of spiritual gifts, which the Apostles and other Christian Believers received, and whereby the truth of the Gospel was strongly confirmed; I say besides this, when any persons like St. *Paul*, have been remarkably conquered, and overcome themselves by the divine force and evidence of Gospel Truth, they must appear the most fit and proper instruments, to spread the knowledge of Christ all over the world. “For, who can be so sufficient for these things, as they (*a*)?” While God was leading such men about in Triumph, he made them very serviceable and successful in promoting christian knowledge *in every place*, wherever they came. And certainly the true knowledge of Christ is likely to be most effectually promoted by those persons, who (all other necessary *gifts* and qualifications supposed) have experienced the saving power, and blessed energy of the Gospel themselves; those, who after strong prejudices and opposition against it in their own minds, have at last been captivated and conquered, convinced and perswaded by it. What was it, but this very thing, which made St. *Paul* in particular, so *choice a Vessel*, such an apt and proper instrument in the hand of God, for ad-

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vancing

(a) Ver. 16. Lat. Vulg.

vancing the knowledge and cause of Christ in the world? And accordingly so much is implied in the following account. (b) *Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy Saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief-priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen Vessel unto me (or a choice instrument) to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel, &c.* All this was spoken of St. Paul, and verified by the happy event, in his very successful endeavours to advance the christian cause and interest in the world at large. And so this was evidently the ground and foundation of his pious thanksgiving in the Text, where he says, *Now thanks be unto God, who always triumpheth over us in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us, in every place.*

Having then considered the *subject matter* of the thanksgiving spoken of, in the words before us, viz. the *divine Triumph*, with it's consequence, fruit, and effect. I proceed now,

Secondly. To shew, that this is *a just ground* and occasion of thanksgiving to God. To which end let it suffice only to remark two things. (1.) The matter under consideration is a *great benefit*, and therefore it
highly

(b) Acts ix. 13—16.

highly deserves thanks to the kind Author of it. And (2.) It is a *divine benefit*, and consequently the thanks must be justly due to God for it.

(1.) This matter is a *great benefit*, and therefore it highly deserves thanks to the kind Author of it. Undoubtedly it is a great benefit to *themselves*, for any persons to have their own enmity and opposition to God removed, so as to become a willing and obedient *people in the day of his power* (c). And must it not likewise be a great advantage to *others*, if by the influence of such examples they are drawn into a saving acquaintance with Christ, as revealed in the *Gospel of the grace of God*? Nay, will not this be an *additional* benefit to ourselves, should any of us be made instrumental in diffusing the knowledge of Christ, and making others true converts to his holy Religion? But, by promoting their happiness, we shall proportionably increase our own; for such is the benevolent spirit of the Gospel, as that a right christian temper will dispose us to rejoice heartily in the felicity of other men, whoever be the instruments of it. And if we ourselves have the pleasure of being any ways useful and serviceable in the affair, what a vast addition must this make to our joy and satisfaction! The delightful prospect of saving immortal souls, is enough to transport us
beyond

beyond measure, and may justly reconcile us to any methods, which may be proper for attaining this desireable end. *Yea*, says the Apostle (*d*) *and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.* q. d. “ If my blood is
 “ poured out as a *drink-offering*, or libation,
 “ upon a sacrifice, to perfect your faith and
 “ obedience, and so render you thereby more
 “ acceptable to God, I congratulate myself
 “ and you upon so great a felicity. There-
 “ fore thanks be unto the kind and gene-
 “ rous Author of so great a benefit to us
 “ both.”

(2.) This is a *divine benefit*, and consequently the thanks must be justly due to God for it. Because the whole scheme of Gospel *Grace and Truth*, which came by *Jesus Christ* (*e*), is a contrivance of divine wisdom and goodness. And moreover, the *publication* of this glorious scheme to the world, is a divine favour. For, the Gospel of Christ is a positive, express Revelation from God, graciously designed for the salvation of men. Therefore, whatever light or influence, mankind in any age and nation, may receive from this divine dispensation, the thanks of all must be due to God. Thus, every sincere convert to the christian faith and profession, hath just reason to say with holy gratitude,
 in

(*d*) Phil. ii. 17.

(*e*) John i. 17.

in the words of St. Paul, *(f)* by the grace of God, I am what I am: “What I am now; that is, a very different person from what I was, before Christ appeared to me at the time of my conversion.” St. Paul goes on, saying, *And his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.* In consequence of which, he had sufficient reason to say, with a warm and grateful heart, *Now thanks be unto God, who always triumpheth over us in Christ, and maketh manifest the favour of his knowledge by us, in every place.*

In short, what the same Apostle told the *Ephesians*, *(g)* may be properly enough said to all other Christian Believers, viz. *By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. For, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (h).* And whence cometh both the word of God, and the opportunity, as well as the faculty of hearing it, but from the gift of God? Therefore, to him are the thanks most justly due, for all the blessed influence and effect of Gospel Grace and Truth upon our own souls, and the souls of others. For, though these good and salutary effects are not produced in any of us, without proper care, attention, and application on our part,

(f) 1 Cor. xv. 10.
(h) Rom. x. 17.

(g) Eph. ii. 8.

part, yet, the *power* we have to improve the means of religious instruction, as well as those *means* themselves, is derived from God. Happy, thrice happy those, who make the same use of this moral power, that St. *Paul* himself did. This great and good man was *not disobedient to the heavenly vision (i)*; but by his future conduct and behaviour, gave others rich occasion *to glorify God in him (k)*, for the great things which God had done for him, and by him for others also.

Upon the whole then we may observe, by way of Inference from this weighty subject.

(1.) The ministration of the Gospel is a matter of great Consequence, and that both to Ministers and private Christians.

The ministration of the Gospel is doubtless a matter of great Consequence to the *Preacher* of it themselves. For, if they are faithful, they will be accepted, whether they prove successful or not. So says the Apostle here in the Text, *We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.* q. d. “ God is well pleased with
 “ our sincere endeavours to promote the true
 “ knowledge of Christ in the world, although
 “ the success of our labours is not always
 “ answerable to our desires, and just expectations ; but only some persons are saved
 “ and others are lost and perish under our
 “ Ministry. Therefore the ground of our
 “ acceptance

(i) Acts xxvi. 19.

(k) Gal. i. 24.

“ acceptance with God, in this very serious
 “ affair, is our fidelity, not our success.” —
 But, on the other hand, if the Ministers of
 the Gospel prove unfaithful, they *shall receive*
the greater condemnation. On which account
 no persons should be too eager and forward
 in undertaking the Ministerial Office (l).

The ministration of the Gospel, is a thing
 of great consequence to the *Hearers*, as well
 as to the *Preachers* of the Word. For, it is
 a mean of saving some, and of condemning
 others. *To the one* (says the Apostle) *we are*
the favour of death unto death; and to the o-
ther, the favour of life unto life. In which
 words, I imagine, St. Paul still continues his
 allusion to a *Triumph*. For, on that occasi-
 on, when all the Temples were filled with
 garlands and perfumes (as was before observ-
 ed) after the triumphal procession was over,
 some of the captives were *put to death*, and
 others were *saved alive* (m). In like man-
 ner, the Ministration of the Gospel, whereby
 the *sweet favour of Christ* is diffused and
made manifest, in the triumphant progress of
 christian knowledge, proves *the favour of*
death unto death, to some who perish under
 it,

(l) Jam. iii. 1.

(m) Vid. ALEX. ab ALEXAND. Genial. Dier. Lib.
 V. Cap 6. Dr. WHITBY hath given a different ac-
 count of the Apostle's language, which does not seem
 quite so natural, as it does not preserve the unity of sen-
 timent so well, as the above.

it, and *the savour of life unto life*, to others who are saved by it. Pity indeed, that all are not saved by it ! A thousand Pities, that any should perish under the Gospel of salvation ! And yet, alas, this will be the case, the unhappy case of all impenitent sinners, and wicked unbelievers. For, the great oracle of truth himself hath solemnly declared, (n) *He that believeth not, shall be damned*. Dreadful words, pronounced by our common and most righteous Judge ! And let none be offended at the seeming severity of his expression, in saying, *He that believeth not, shall be damned*, or condemned, that is, for his *unbelief* and impenitency. For, Christ's *saying* so, observe, does not properly *make* it so, but only *declares* the case to be so, and thereby gives all men fair warning, what will, in *fact*, be the natural and just, though fatal consequence of their obstinate impenitency and unbelief under the Gospel. The truth of the matter is plainly *this* ; the wickedness of men, unrepented of, would be their ruin, and the just ground of their final Condemnation, suppose they had never heard a single word of the Gospel. But when they *have* heard it, authoritatively *calling* them to *repentance*, holiness, and heaven ; I say, if after this, they slight and disregard it, do not believe and obey it, but obstinately reject it ; by so doing, they *reject the counsel of God against*

(n) Mark xvi. 16.

gainst themselves, and judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life (o).

The result then of the whole is this, the Ministration of the Gospel is a matter of great Consequence.

(2.) What gives the Ministration of the Gospel so much weight, and renders it a matter of so great importance, is the *divine power and authority* with which it is attended. For, as the Apostle adds, *Who is sufficient for these things?* “What man is equal to such
“ a work; or able to give the Gospel so
“ much weight and authority, as to make
“ it a mean of saving believers, and of condemning unbelievers? Who is sufficient
“ for these things of *himself*, without a divine concurrence and designation?” The same thing is further suggested a little after. (p) *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able Ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit, i. e. the Gospel.* But in what way, and by what means, were the Apostles, and other Preachers of the Word, made *able Ministers of the New Testament*, or Covenant? It was by the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which at once led them into all Truth, and likewise proved their Inspiration and divine Commission. And thus, by virtue of
this

(o) Luke vii. 30. Acts xiii. 46.

(p) Chap. iii. 5, 6.

this divine *unction*, they had *received from the holy One (q)*, they were qualified to be *unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish*. In consequence of which, the Ministration of the Gospel became *then*, and continues to be *still*, a matter of great weight and importance. For, as the Gospel was a divine Revelation at the first, it must remain a divine Revelation always, and still *in force*, not having been superseded by any other. And so, being stamp'd with this truly *indelible character*, it justly challenges the highest deference and regard under all succeeding Ministrations to the end of time. Therefore,

(3.) It must be equally our wisdom, and our duty, for every one of us to see his own interest, and concern in the Gospel dispensation, which is a dispensation of grace and mercy to the children of men. *Now then* (says the Apostle) *(r) we are Ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead. Be ye reconciled unto God. Thus the Gospel is a word of Reconciliation (s)*. It is a solemn message sent from heaven to the inhabitants of our world, inviting us all to make our peace with God (as the *party offended*, but not inexorable) upon the gracious terms laid down in the Gospel. Which, by the way, is evidently the true notion of
being

(q) John ii. 20.
(s) Ver. 19.

(r) Chap. v. 20.

being *reconciled*, in the sacred language of the New Testament (*t*). The law of *Creation*, be it observed, was a law of *Innocency*. For nothing could be more reasonable and just, than that innocent creatures should be required and obliged to preserve their Innocency pure and uncorrupt. Such then was the original state of mankind. But the remedial law of *Grace* and *Redemption*, is a law of *repentance* and reformation, which implies and supposes a foregoing apostacy and defection from the primary law of Nature. And thus, Christianity is a *Religion of Grace* suitably adapted to the state and condition of a sinful, guilty, lost world. Accordingly, the whole frame, and constitution of the Gospel, is built upon this same plan. For, our blessed Saviour publicly declared, (*u*) *I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to Repentance*. And after he had died for our sins, according to the Scriptures (*x*), he commanded, that *Repentance, and Remission of sins, should be preached in his name among all nations* (*y*). But before that time, Christ gave his Disciples a form, or pattern of Prayer, wherein he taught them to pray for *the pardon of their sins*, as duly as for *daily bread* (*z*). And afterwards he directed them to pray in his

(*t*) See Matt. v. 23, 24. and Dr. HAMMOND in loc. H. GROT. de Satisfact. Christ. Cap. vii.

(*u*) Matt. ix. 13.

(*x*) 1 Cor. xv. 3.

(*y*) Luke xxiv. 47.

(*z*) Mat. vi. 11, 12.

name, when after his ascension, they offered up their devotions to God (a). Now whence, to common apprehension, arises the propriety and usefulness of our addressing the Deity by this only Mediator between God and men (b), but from the consideration of his superior dignity of character as the *holy One of God*, on the one hand, and of our own unworthiness as *sinners*, on the other hand; and from the apt tendency it hath to make us more *humblly* sensible, that we *are* unworthy sinners, and thereby render us fitter objects of divine favour? I say, to *common apprehension*; for Christianity is a popular Religion, designed for the *use*, and for that reason *adapted* to the capacities, and *level* to the conceptions of *common people*. To all which, let me add, *both* the Christian *Sacraments* have the same signification, and are manifestly founded upon the same principle; for they have a reference to the *Remission of sins* (c).

Thus, you see, the Religion of the Gospel is a Religion of Grace, being so framed and contrived, as to suit the case of guilty sinners. Consequently, it is well adapted to our own state and condition. For, alas, what are we all but sinners, in a greater or less degree? But *if we say, we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (d).

Our

(a) John xvi. 26.

(b) 1 Tim. ii. 5.

(c) See Acts xxii. 16. Matt. xxvi. 28.

(d) 1 John i. 8.

Our very *saying*, we have no sin, might prove us some of the greatest sinners of all, by convicting us, not only of *falsehood*, but likewise of *spiritual pride*, which is a *devilish* sin itself. But after all, this is our great comfort and support, in our guilty condition, that, *if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.—And he is the Propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of all the world* (e). For, there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all men (f).

And now, my fellow Christians, does it not manifestly appear, to be every man's wisdom and duty, to see his own interest and concern in the Gospel dispensation? Can any thinking person imagine, that it was only a *temporary* institution, calculated and designed for the use and benefit of *one* age alone; though the *Jewish* dispensation continued in force for many ages? But, as it is a dispensation of Grace and Mercy to the sons of sinful men, so it hath undeniably it's use and importance in our times, as well as it had in the Apostles days. For, excepting the case of *idolatry* (if that is an exception) what vices were practised in their days, that do not too much prevail and abound in this present age, all over the world? Answer me this question, you who fancy that the *men of this gene-*

M 2

ration

(e) 1 John ii. 1, 2.

(f) 1 Tim. ii. 5.

ration have no need of a Saviour, or of such a scheme of salvation as is revealed and delivered to the world, in the *Gospel of the Grace of God*.—Besides, are we not all mortal? And is not *death the wages of sin, but the gift of God eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord (g)?* For, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (h). And, my fellow mortals, is this no concern of yours and mine? Moreover, have we no concern or interest in the blood, the *precious blood of Christ, that Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world (i)?* The *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (k)*; or, (which is the same thing in effect) the *slain Lamb*, whose *book of life* began to be written, and so bears date from the foundation of the world. And, if the Sacrifice of Christ looks back to the *beginning* of the world, as also the Apostle to the *Hebrews (l)* seems to suggest; why not forward to the end of the world? Especially considering, that the *Lord Jesus* himself instituted a sacred Ordinance, to be a standing memorial of his death and sufferings, *till he come again (m)*. If the virtue and efficacy, the use and application of Christ's Sacrifice, was to have been limited and confined to the first age of the Christian Church, why are Christians in all succeeding ages re-
quired

(g) Rom. vi. 23.

(h) 1 Cor. xv. 22.

(i) John i. 29.

(k) Rev. xiii. 8.

(l) Heb. ix. 25, 26.

(m) 1 Cor. xi. 26.

quired to commemorate his death in the Ordinance of the *Lord's Supper*, till the time of his second Advent?

From what hath been said then, it is manifest, that the Christian Institution carries in it some fair internal marks and characters of it's own perpetuity. However, one Observation more let me add, to the same purpose, before I conclude. When Christ gave his Apostles a solemn commission to *Go and disciple all nations, by baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost, &c.* he told them in the close, *And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world* (n). A declaration, which implied that as Christ would alway have a Church upon earth, *unto the end of the world*, so Gospel Ministrations, and consequently, a Gospel Ministry, should be continued in his Church unto the end of the world.

But, O, what will come to pass at that important period, the end of this world! Have patience, my Brethren, to bestow one serious thought upon that subject, before you drop, or withdraw your attention. I say, what will come to pass, at the end of this world? Why, then shall ye see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory, to *judge both the quick and the dead*; according to an acknowledged article of the Christian Faith, which equally

M 3

concerns

(n) Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

concerns us all. *For we must all* (both Ministers and People) *appear before the judgement-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done, in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men* (o). And would to God, we could prevail with them cordially to embrace, and sincerely to obey the *everlasting Gospel* (p); so as to *know*, and duly consider, and diligently mind, the *things of their peace*, before they are *hid from their eyes* for ever. Behold, now is the *accepted time*! Behold, now is the *day of salvation*! *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

(o) 2 Cor. v. 10, 11.

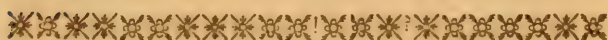
(p) Rev. xiv. 6.





DISCOURSE VIII.

King *Agrippa* almost a Christian.



ACTS xxvi. 28.

Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

THESE are the words of King
 T *Agrippa*, spoken to *Paul*, after
 that Prince had heard his apology
 for himself, and his christian pro-
 fession. *Almost*, said he, *thou persuadest me*
to be a Christian. What a pity, that *Agrip-*
pa was not altogether persuaded to be a Chri-
 stian! A great ornament he might have been
 to Christianity, at it's first appearance in the
 world, and no less a comfort to himself, by
 embracing the christian faith, and placing
 himself at the head of the christian interest.
 But, by stopping short of a thorough con-
 version, he not only denied his seasonable as-
 sistance and support to the christian cause,
 but, I am afraid, very narrowly lost his own
 Soul. Unhappy *Agrippa*! He appears to
 M 4 have

have been under some convictions, when he had heard *St. Paul's* excellent *defence*; but the impressions made upon his mind thereby, proved not strong enough to effect his entire conversion to the christian faith and profession. His Understanding, we may suppose, was informed, and it is likely, his Heart was touched in some degree, but not quite *persuaded*; for his Will was not determined, nor his Affections engaged to a full consent, and compliance with the demands of the Gospel. *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. Almost*, and no more.

From this remarkable and striking instance, we may take occasion to observe, that — *A Person may be favoured with the best means of Gospel instruction, and yet, after all, be no more than almost persuaded to be a Christian.* This tenderly affecting truth, is clearly exemplified in the case before us; by the consideration whereof, I shall endeavour to illustrate and confirm the *Observation* from it in the following method.

I. I shall consider what may be supposed to be the *state* and *frame* of *Agrippa's* mind, when he was almost persuaded to be a Christian.

II. I shall shew, what there was in *St. Paul's* discourse, that had a *tendency* to *persuade* him to be a Christian.

III. I shall

III. I shall enquire, what might be the true *cause* and reason, that after all, *Agrippa* was no more than *almost* persuaded.

And then conclude the Subject with some proper Reflections.

I. I am to enquire what may be supposed to be the *state* and *frame* of *Agrippa's* mind, when he was almost persuaded to be a Christian.

By a Christian, you know, from the *sacred* history, is meant a *Disciple*, or Follower of Christ. For the *Disciples* were called *Christians* (a). They were so denominated after Christ, because Jesus Christ is *the author and finisher of our faith* (b), *the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession* (c). And this honourable name of *Christians* may be regarded, as a term of *union* among themselves, designed to swallow up all party names and distinctions among the followers of Christ, as well as a mark of their relation to him, as the founder of the christian *System*. Thus, as the disciples of *Plato* were called *Platonists*, and the disciples of *Pythagoras* were called *Pythagoreans*, and the disciples of *Epicurus* were called *Epicureans*, &c. so, in like manner, were the disciples of Christ called *Christians* after him, as owning him for their head and leader. But, as Christianity is a religious

(a) Acts xi. 26.

(b) Heb. xii. 2.

(c) Heb. iii. 1,

religious Institution, the “ name of a Christian, as one observes (*d*), signifies a person, who by the knowledge, and doctrine of Christ, is distinguished for modesty, and justice, and patience, and constancy, and the professed worship of the one only God.”

This remark being premised, concerning the christian *name*, I now proceed to consider, *when* any person may be said to be almost persuaded to be a Christian. Which will discover, what was the state and frame of *Agrippa*’s mind, when he made such a declaration of himself in the Text. This disquisition, perhaps, had been needless, if some Writers had not given a wrong turn to the words, and placed them in an improper light, by interpreting them to this sense ; “ Thou persuadest me to be a Christian *almost*.” That is, to do many things, but not the whole of what Christianity requires. And hence, occasion hath been taken to shew, how far a person may go in the profession of Christianity, and yet, come short of being a true and real Christian. But how pious and useful soever, in their place, such kind of discourses may be, to *try and cast the almost Christian*, or to detect the false professor, they appear to have no proper foundation in the Text. For the person that uttered the words, I mean *Agrippa*, was no christian professor

professor at all. Therefore, when he told *St. Paul, almost* (or within a little) *thou persuadest me to be a Christian*, his meaning and design plainly and properly was, to express, not the degree of *Christianity* to which he was persuaded, but the degree of *persuasion* with which he was inclined to embrace the whole together. And so, the state and frame of his mind, in this case, may be conceived to be that of a person, convinced in his judgement of the truth and reasonableness of Christianity, and in some measure inclined to embrace it ; but his convictions and inclinations of this kind, are over-balanced and over-ruled by some contrary principles and motives of action. According to which account, I observe,

(1.) A person almost persuaded to be a Christian, is, we may suppose, convinced in his *judgement* of the truth and reasonableness of the Christian Religion. Whatever prejudices he had entertained against the Gospel of Christ before, yet, upon duly considering the *heavenly nature* of the christian doctrine, the *divine evidence* with which it is attended, and the perfect agreement it hath with the former Revelations of God, he sees sufficient ground and reason to believe the Christian Revelation to be true ; he is well satisfied in his own mind of it's truth and divine authority, and he hath no remaining scruples upon this head, or none of any weight and moment.

This,

This, it may be presumed, was *Agrippa's* case. For, he does not appear to have had any objections to make against the truth and divinity of the Christian Doctrine, as it was delivered, and maintained by *St. Paul*. On the contrary, so far from objecting any thing, overcome, as it were, by the superior force of truth, he proclaimed his convictions in open court, without any constraint or compulsion, besides the strong impression made upon his mind thereby.

(2.) A person almost persuaded to be a Christian, is in some measure *inclined*, and disposed to *embrace* Christianity, or to profess himself a Christian. This was apparently the true state and frame of *Agrippa's* mind, expressed with his own mouth in the words of the Text. For, besides that, in the common use of speech, for a man to *be a Christian*, and to *profess* himself one, is the same thing; I say, besides this, it is observable, that in those days, and as matters *then* stood, for a man to profess himself a Christian, and to be a Christian indeed, was, in effect, the same thing too. At the beginning, Christianity met with so great opposition from every quarter, as that few persons could have the courage and resolution, openly to embrace it, but those, who acted from a principle of Religion and Conscience. Accordingly, the Apostle speaks (e) of *suffering as a Christian*. This
was

(e) 1 Pet. iv. 16.

was a common case in the primitive times, when the followers of Christ suffered as *Christians*, and for no other reason, but because they were Christians. On this single account they suffered very hard and grievous things. They suffered all manner of abuses, and *reproaches for the name of Christ (f)*; *that worthy name by the which they were called (g)*. Now, under these circumstances, there was little or no difference between a person's *being* a Christian, and *professing* himself one, in the nature of the *thing*, as well as in the use of the *name*. When therefore *Agrippa* declared himself almost persuaded to be a Christian, this declaration implied at least, that he was in some measure inclined to embrace Christianity, so far as to profess himself a Christian. His language imports, that he could almost find in his heart to turn Christian, and declare openly in favour of the Christian Religion. But after all,

(3.) A person of this character is one, whose *convictions* and *inclinations* of this kind are over-balanced, and over-ruled by some *contrary* principles and motives of action. Some particular views, attachments and connections, have a greater influence upon him, and prevail over his better thoughts and disposition. This was probably the true state and frame of *Agrippa's* mind, on the occasion here referred unto. Strong convictions
of

(f) 1 Pet. iv. 14.

(g) Jam. ii. 7.

of the truth of Christianity, extorted from him a frank, open, and publick confession of his good-liking for it, and of his inclination to embrace it; but, though his mind might hang in doubtful suspence for a time, the opposite views he entertained, and the contrary passions he had to gratify, determined him at last the other way. And thus, he was almost persuaded to be a Christian, and but almost; he was not persuaded altogether. Which is less to be wondered at in a person of his rank, and station of life; especially, considering the trying circumstances of the times; of which before.

So much for the *first* thing, proposed to consideration, viz. What was the state and frame of *Agrippa's* mind, when he was almost persuaded to be a Christian. The words of his confession do not refer to the degree of *Christianity* to which he was persuaded; (as their meaning hath been mistaken) but to the degree of *persuasion*, with which he was inclined to embrace the whole; which are two very different things.

The character which hath been described, present unto us a true picture of ourselves, so far as we are determined to act in the affair of Religion, more by some worldly interests, and sinister views, than by the impartial judgement and reason of our own minds. And let me observe, that though the *state* of christian professors is now much altered, and
changed

changed from what it was in the Apostles days, yet the true *principle* of a christian profession, is always the same; no changes of times or circumstances, can alter this principle, which consists in a prevailing love to the cause of Christ (*b*), which is the cause of God, and true Religion. Therefore upon this plan must all Christians form themselves in all ages. And so we should be Martyrs in principle, though we are not called by the fiery trial to be Martyrs in fact; and if we are not obliged to *lay down* our lives, we ought to *lay them out* in the service of God, by a steady course of religious Virtue, superior to all temptations, and never, *Agrippa like*, suffer any sort of passions or affections to get the better of our convictions.

II. I proceed now to shew, what *tendency* there was in St. Paul's Discourse, to persuade him to be a Christian.

Upon inquiry, it will be found, that in his excellent apology, many things are contained, which may reasonably persuade any man to be a Christian, that will hear Reason, and honestly yield to the force of Truth. In particular, we may observe here—A free submission of the christian cause to impartial examination—An account of the perfect agreement of the Gospel, with former divine Revelations.

(*b*) Matt. x. 37, 38. Mark viii. 38. Luke xii. 8, 9. xiv. 26.

velations—A declaration of the bright overbearing evidence in favour of Christianity, which had actually conquered the strongest prejudices in his own case—And a publick solemn appeal to those great and notorious facts, which incontestibly proved the truth, and divine authority of the Christian Revelation. All which things are plainly suggested in his publick speech before King *Agrippa*.

(1.) *St. Paul* freely submitted the christian cause to impartial examination. For, in these terms he addressed himself to the King, (i) *I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee, &c. because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions among the Jews; wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.* *St. Paul*, you see, esteemed it a great happiness that he had now an opportunity to vindicate his own, and the christian cause, which were closely connected together, before a knowing man of high dignity, a Prince who was capable of forming a right judgement of persons and things. And thus from ignorance and prejudice, he appealed to candor and good sense. Now this is one good argument, and *presumptive evidence*, in favour of Christianity, that it does not shun the light, or take advantage of men's ignorance to impose upon their credulity; but, on the contrary, submits

submits itself to impartial examination, and is very glad to have it's important cause *patiently heard*, and fairly tried before the best and most able judges.—Here I cannot forbear reflecting, with some degree of indignation, upon the unfair and disingenuous dealing of a late Writer (*k*), who, in order to invalidate the proof of Christianity from the *Old Testament*, had the assurance to tell the world, that *Festus*, a man well skilled in the *Jewish Religion*, thought *Paul* mad, for reasoning in the manner he did; whereas, *Agrippa*, who knew nothing of the matter, was almost persuaded to be a Christian. Gross misrepresentation, and scandalous falsehood! For the truth is, *Agrippa*, and not *Festus*, was the person *expert in all customs and questions among the Jews*, being a *Jew* himself, and *Festus* a *Roman*. This remark not only exposes that Writer's pitiful mistake, but strongly retorts the argument against him. For pray observe, if *Agrippa*, who was so well acquainted with the *Jewish Religion*, was almost persuaded to be a Christian, then we may justly conclude, that Christianity hath some ground and foundation in the *Old Testament*, that is, in the promises, and predictions of the *Jewish Scriptures*. This leads us to the next thing remarkable in the Apostle's Discourse, viz.

(*k*) Author of the *Grounds of the Christian Religion*:

(2.) An account of the perfect *harmony* and agreement of the Gospel with former divine Revelations. (l) *And now I stand, and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our Fathers, &c.* And again, further on, (m) *I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things, than those, which the Prophets and Moses did say should come. That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light to the People, and to the Gentiles.* This exact conformity and correspondence between the predictions of the *Old*, and the events of the *New Testament*, is a strong argument of the truth of Christianity, and of it's being a Revelation from God. These things give mutual light and illustration, the one to the other. And this consideration, doubtless, had great weight with *Agrippa*, and contributed not a little, to fasten conviction on his mind. For, upon *St. Paul's* urging the matter home to him, and saying, (n) *King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets? I know that thou believest; Agrippa* replied, without any hesitation or demur, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.* So sensibly he seems to have been struck, and so strongly impressed with the argument for Christianity, drawn from, and grounded upon the evangelical prophecies of the *Old Testament*.

(3.) A

(l) Ver. 6.

(m) Ver. 22, 23.

(n) Ver. 27.

(3.) A declaration of the bright over-bearing evidence in favour of Christianity, which had actually conquered the strongest prejudices in *St. Paul's* own particular case. No person was ever more strongly prejudiced against the Gospel, than this great Apostle himself had formerly been. And yet no person was now better established in the Christian Faith, or more thoroughly determined to assert and maintain it at all hazards. What then could be the ground and cause of this great and wonderful change; and from whence could it proceed? But from the clearest and most convincing evidence of the truth of Christianity. Accordingly this is the account which *St. Paul* himself gave of the whole affair to King *Agrippa*. For, in the *first* place, he tells the King (*o*), what strong prejudices he once entertained against Christianity, and what a violent Persecutor he had been of the Christians in time past. Next, he relates in order (*p*) the particular manner and occasion of his strange and sudden Conversion, by a glorious appearance of Christ to him from Heaven. And then he declares, (*q*) what a wonderful change was made thereby in his temper and conduct; and how from thence forward he became a most zealous Preacher of that Faith, which once he persecuted and opposed with all his might. And

N 2

now,

(*o*) Ver. 9—12.(*p*) Ver. 13—18.(*q*) Ver. 19—22.

now, had not the consideration of such an extraordinary case, a mighty great force and efficacy, to convince any thinking man of the divine evidence of Christianity, which was able to bear down such exceeding strong prejudices, in a person that was no Enthusiast, or Impostor (r) ?

(4.) A public solemn appeal to those great and notorious facts, which incontestibly proved the truth and divine authority of the Christian Revelation. (s) *For the King knoweth these things, before whom also I speak freely ; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hid from him ; for this thing was not done in a corner.* The affair of Christ's preaching and miracles, particularly his miraculous appearing to St. Paul at the time of his Conversion, after his own resurrection from the dead ; this was a matter of public cognizance, the report whereof had filled both City and Country.—Now, laying all these things together, what wonder is it, if *Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian ?* Is it not rather just matter of surprise and concern too, that he was not persuaded altogether, according to St. Paul's pious and benevolent wish, both for him, and the rest of the company. (t) *I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me*
this

(r) See this argument set in a good light by the Author of an excellent Discourse on St. Paul's Conversion.

(s) Ver. 26.

(t) Ver. 29.

this day, were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds.—These bonds, which look so frightful and disgraceful in the eye of the world. In this last expression St. Paul seems to hint, where the matter pinched, and what it was, that stuck with *Agrippa*, and many other persons in those days, (especially among the people of higher rank) when the profession of Christianity was attended with so many difficulties, and worldly discouragements. I come now,

III. To enquire, what might be the true cause and reason that after all, *Agrippa* was no more than *almost* persuaded. This inquiry is not a matter of mere curiosity, or vain speculation, but hath it's practical use and importance. For, it may point out to us, by way of caution and warning to ourselves, those very things, which are apt to influence mens determinations and practice contrary to principle, and to the real sentiments and convictions of their own minds. A case, I fear, too common both in high and low life.

(1.) One may, I think, without any breach of charity, suppose, that *Agrippa* was determined in this case, by his worldly interests. The riches of a Kingdom, the honours of a Crown, and the pleasures of a Court, are a sufficient trial of integrity and virtue at any time; but, when these things are put in the balance, over against poverty, disgrace, and

distress, the temptation must needs be very strong. This is a temptation, which few, like *Moses*, have the courage and honesty to resist (*u*). And this was the very case now before us. *Agrippa* saw, in the person of *Paul*, an affecting image of what himself might shortly be, if he should turn Christian. This *Agrippa* saw; a sad and forbidding sight! Alas, *those bonds, those bonds!* This circumstance might save the King, but lost the Christian. In every such instance, we may see that remark of Christ verified, (*x*) *How can ye believe (i. e. so as to avow your belief, as becomes honest men) that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which comes from God only; viz. the honour of the divine approbation, and the reward of approved virtue and integrity?* This was the case with many persons in our Saviour's time, persons of rank and figure, who secretly *believed in him* (and so were almost persuaded to be Christians) *but did not confess him openly, because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* And if this was so common a case at that time, it is less to be wondered at, if it was *Agrippa's* case not long after; as it is the shameful case still with all persons, who are influenced and governed more by worldly views and motives, than by a principle of Religion and Conscience.

(2.) Want

(*u*) See Heb. xi. 24—26. (*x*) John v. 44.

(2.) Want of due Consideration and Reflection may be assigned as a concurrent cause of *Agrippa's* behaviour in this important affair; an affair of that importance, as richly deserved, and justly required his best attention. Fond as he was of the pomps and vanities of this world, which proved his snare and his ruin to all appearance, a little deep Consideration, and serious Reflection, might have opened his eyes to see through those empty shadows; and by fixing his thoughts upon the last issue and result of things, given a proper check to his worldly desires and affections, when he compared the little interests of time with the infinite concerns of eternity. What a pity it is, that *Agrippa* did not ask himself that question of our Saviour, and urge it home upon his own heart, (y) *What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?* These, and the like reflections, which his own mind might have suggested to him, would probably have contributed very much towards determining him fully in favour of Christianity, by disposing him to prefer an heavenly, before an earthly Crown.

Had he only considered the state of the the Christian Interest, at that time, in a proper light, and reflected with himself, what a credit and ornament he might have been

to the Christian Cause, when it met with so much opposition ; this very reflection might have given an happy turn to his *ambition*, and urged him on to signalize himself gloriously, as a brave champion for the cause of God and Religion. But these things were hidden from his eyes, dazzled with the false lustre of worldly glories, which seems to have enchanted his mind, and banished from his breast all serious thoughts. And thus, the wrong steps he took at last, may be resolved in some measure into want of due Consideration and Reflection. A very common cause of men's miscarriages in religious and moral conduct.

(3.) The neglect of serious and fervent Prayer may be deemed another cause of this great miscarriage. The hearts of Princes, as well as of inferior men, are in the hands of God, who can influence, guide, and govern them, as he pleases, when other counsels and persuasions nothing avail. As Prayer is a solemn address to God, it hath an apt tendency in itself to impress the soul with those religious sentiments, which are proper to incline and excite it to a right course of action. And besides, Prayer, which is the pious language of dependence, is also an appointed mean of obtaining the divine aids *to help in time of need* (z). For our heavenly Father *will give the holy Spirit to them that ask him* (a). Therefore

(z) Heb. iv. 16.

(a) Luke xi. 13.

fore had King *Agrippa* betaken himself to *the throne of Grace*, and earnestly prayed for divine assistance in forming good resolutions, answerable to his present convictions, he might have come off better, and acquitted himself with more honour, and proved as found a Convert to Christianity, as *St. Paul* himself, concerning whom, about the time of his Conversion, it was said, *(b) Behold, he prayeth!*

Thus, the neglect of serious fervent Prayer, want of due Consideration and Reflection, together with the prevailing influence of worldly interest, may be assigned, as the probable causes and reasons of *Agrippa's* being no more than almost persuaded to be a Christian.

Having now finished what I had to propose for illustration of this subject, I shall conclude my Discourse with the following Reflections.

(1.) Religion is properly a matter of *choice*, and the result of rational conviction and persuasion. For he, that will be a Christian, must not be compelled, but *persuaded* to be one. The power of persuasion is the only force or compulsion proper to be used for that purpose. In this case, *every man must be fully persuaded in his own mind*, of the truth and excellency of the Christian Religion. And so, by such considerations as these, all
persons

(b) Acts ix. 11.

persons should be *compelled to come* into the Christian Church.

(2.) The great men of the world are not always any sure guides, or safe patterns, for us to follow. It is true, such personages are wont to be envied, admired, and imitated in a servile manner; but when we consider the peculiar temptations to which they are exposed, we may see sufficient cause to view them in a different light, and to look upon, with concern, as objects of pity, and compassion, rather than that of envy and emulation. Their greatness oftentimes is the chief hinderance and obstruction to their goodness. If *Agrippa*, for instance, had not been a King, he might have stood a better chance for being a Christian. How little stress then ought to be laid upon that popular plea (c). *Have any of the Rulers, or of the Pharisees believed in him?* meaning Jesus Christ. If the example of the great men of the world, at the beginning of the Christian Church, had been generally followed, it would scarcely have had any beginning at all, but must have been stifled in the very birth. *For you see your calling, brethren,* (says St. Paul) *(d) how that, not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called, &c.* Therefore, let not the great world, any more than the little world, be the guide of our faith, or the rule of our life, no further than

(c) John vii. 48.

(d) 1 Cor. i. 26, 27.

than they appear to be followers of God, and friends of Truth and Righteousness.

(3.) How much does it concern us all, to examine the true grounds of our religious profession. Are we *persuaded* to be Christians? Are we not only *almost*, but *altogether* persuaded? Nay, are we properly persuaded at all? And have we embraced Christianity upon rational grounds of conviction? Or, on the other hand, have we taken up our Christian Profession only for fashion's sake, in compliance with common custom, and because Christianity is the Religion of our Country? As we are born into the world in a state of *ignorance*, it is certainly a great blessing to be descended from christian Parents, who, by dedicating us to God in our infancy, by *name*, laid themselves under special engagements, to give us a religious education. But, as the case now stands, our making a public profession of Christianity, is no sure mark or sign of our being Christians indeed, though it might have passed for a good evidence in times of Persecution. Let us then be solicitous to prove our Christianity, both to ourselves and others, not merely by a christian profession, but by a christian temper and practice. For, if we cannot maintain our virtue and integrity, by resisting the *temptations common to men*, what proof can we give of the *sincerity* of our christian profession? Upon that supposition, how can we
make

make it appear, that we love Christ and his service, above all competition; or what satisfactory grounds can we have to believe, that if we were put to it, we could stand the test of the fiery trial? *If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace thou art not safe, what wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan (e)?* But surely those persons are, at the best, but *almost persuaded to be Christians*, who at present adhere to their christian profession, under any form, only for want of a proper temptation to desert it. We should learn to *live* Martyrs to our holy Religion, that so we may be qualified to *die* Martyrs for it, if occasion required. Let us then, like the primitive Christians, *not talk, but live great things (f)*.—I shall conclude all, in the words of an excellent Prelate (g). “From Christ
 “ we are called Christians; and that blessed
 “ name should influence our practice. It is
 “ a great thing to be a Christian; it is a
 “ dignity and honour to the greatest among
 “ us, and the best of all our titles. We
 “ may well glory in this blessed name, and
 “ value it above all other titles and proper-
 “ ties. But then, we must remember, what
 “ this

(e) Jerem. xii. 5. Vid. J. CLERIC. in loc.

(f) Non magna Loquimur, sed Vivimus. M. MINUT. FEL.

(g) Bp. KIDDER. Demonst. of the Messiah. P. I. Chap. I.

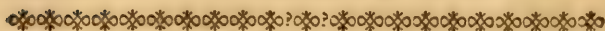
“ this name requires at our hands. When
 “ we name the name of Christ, we are ob-
 “ liged to depart from all iniquity. Let us
 “ consider, how well this name becomes us.
 “ Are we like to our blessed Saviour? Have
 “ we that unction from the Holy One?
 “ Doth the Spirit of Jesus dwell in us? If
 “ that holy Spirit be not in us, we have a
 “ name to live, and are dead. We may
 “ fondly conceit what we please of our-
 “ selves; but if any man have not the Spi-
 “ rit of Christ, he is none of his.”






DISCOURSE IX.

Christians the Temple of God.



2 COR. vi. 16.

—*For ye are the Temple of the living God*—


T HIS argument is urged by St. Paul, as a strong reason for Christians abstaining from Idolatry. A caution very seasonable and proper at that time, more especially for the Church of *Corinth*; as that City was famous, or rather, *infamous* for the Temple of *Venus*, (a) whose impure rites were a lewd scene of Debauchery. It is introduced in the following manner. (b) *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or, what part hath he that believeth, with an Infidel?*

(a) Vid. STRABO, Geog. Lib. VIII.

(b) Ver. 14—16.

Infidel? And what agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols? For ye are the Temple of the living God—&c. From hence it may be observed,

“ Christians, considered in themselves, or
“ in a body, are the Temple of the living
“ God.”

In discoursing upon which Observation, I propose the following method.

I. I shall inquire into the proper notion, use, and design, of a *Temple*.

II. From thence I shall take occasion to shew, in what respect Christians are the Temple of *the living God*.

And then improve the Subject in some practical Reflections.

I. I am to enquire into the proper notion, use, and design of a *Temple*. Now, a Temple was anciently and originally, a place dedicated to the *honour and service* of some Deity, and supposed to be favoured with the peculiar *presence* of that same Deity, which was there worshiped. This notion of a Temple might be easily illustrated, and confirmed by the account of different Writers, both sacred and profane. For example, concerning the *Tabernacle*, which was a portable Temple, (c) *The Lord said unto Moses, let them make me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell among*

(c) Exod. xxv. 8.

among them. And says the Psalmist, (d) *Until I find a Place for the Lord, an Habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.* Again, (e) *Lord, I have loved the Habitation of thy House, and the Place where thy honour dwelleth.* (f) *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the House of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his Temple.* The same notion and idea of a Temple, as being the House and Habitation of the God they worshiped, obtained among the Heathens also. Thus we read in Scripture, of *Beth-peor, Beth-dagon, Beth-ashteroth, Beth-shemesb, &c.* signifying the *House of Peor, the House of Dagon, &c.* So likewise in profane Authors, mention is made of the *sacred Domes, the holy Habitations, the Houses of the Gods, the glorious Houses of the Gods*; meaning their Temples.

It is true, the Most High *dwelleth not in Temples made with hands*, so as to be circumscribed within their narrow bounds. But yet, in condescension to human weakness, he was pleased to have a Temple of old, erected to the honour of his name, and which he distinguished with some special marks of his more immediate presence. For, if we enquire into the origin of Temples, they will be found to be of greater antiquity, than either

(d) Psal. cxxxii. 5.

(e) Psal. xxvi. 8.

(f) Psal. xxvii. 4.

ther *Solomon's Temple*, or the *Tabernacle of Moses*. It is therefore supposed, that God graciously condescended to have a Temple, in compliance with the prevailing customs of other Nations, who erected Temples to their most famous Kings and Heroes, paying them divine honours after their death. And since the ancient Gods of the Heathens were their *deified Princes*, this circumstance may naturally account for the institution of the *Jewish Theocracy*, in which Jehovah was both their *King*, and their *God (g)*. Hence it is, that *Jerusalem*, the City of their solemnities, and the Place where the Temple stood, is called *the City of the great King (b)*. And so the Temple was, as it were, his Palace, where he resided, and received the homage of his subjects; or, “the Temple was a sacred
 “ House, where God, as King of the *He-*
 “ *brews*, dwelt, as it were, among his sub-
 “ jects (*i*).” In order therefore to maintain the state and dignity of a King, it was ordained, that *no man* should *appear before the Lord empty (k)*. Because it was customary, when persons approached the royal Presence, to present the King with some gift (*l*).

And now, perhaps, we may be able to form a true notion of those gifts and offer-

(g) Isa. xxxiii. 22. xliii. 15. (b) Mat. v. 35.

(i) OUTRAM. de Sacrif. Lib. I. Cap. 3. S. 1.

(k) Deut. xvi. 16.

(l) Ps. lxxii. 10, 11. Matt. ii. 11.

ings, which were presented at the Temple unto God. For, whatever was the *origin* of Sacrifices, the nature of these offerings may be best understood, by comparing them with these presents, which, upon different occasions, subjects used to make to their Sovereign. Accordingly, “ Sacrifices were considered of
 “ old, only as gifts presented to God, and
 “ as answering the same ends with presents
 “ among men. Therefore, as men are wont
 “ to present a King or Governor with a gift,
 “ when they would pacify him, pay him
 “ homage, express their respect, ask a fa-
 “ vour, or testify their gratitude; so the an-
 “ cients made use of Sacrifices for all these
 “ purposes, and gave them different names,
 “ according to the various ends which they
 “ were designed to serve. For, when the
 “ gifts were brought to the altar to pacify
 “ the Deity, they were called *expiatory*;
 “ when to pay him homage, and to ac-
 “ knowledge God’s dominion, *burnt-offer-*
 “ *ings*, or *honorary Sacrifices*; when to ex-
 “ press a respectful loving mind towards God,
 “ *peace-offerings*; when to shew their grati-
 “ tude, *votive* and *eucharistic*; and when to
 “ obtain a favour, *precatory offerings* (m).”

I am not ignorant, that a different notion of Sacrifices hath been advanced, from the supposed rise and occasion of them. Particularly,

(m) SPENCER de legib. Hebr. Lib. II. Cap. 3.

cularly, a late Writer says, (n) " Supposing
 " now, that eating and drinking together,
 " were the known ordinary symbols of
 " friendship, and were the usual rites of en-
 " gaging in covenants and leagues, and of
 " renewing and ratifying of *friendship*; it
 " will not be difficult to account from hence,
 " for the origin of Sacrifices." But the same
 Author says, (o) " It must be owned, that
 " we know nothing with any certainty, a-
 " bout the origin of *Sacrifices*." Therefore,
 by his own confession, his notion of the
 matter is a mere conjecture, and, in my opi-
 nion, not the most happy one. Because it
 assigns no *adequate* reason of these sacred rites.
 For, the most *ancient* Sacrifices, whereof we
 have any certain account, were *burnt-offer-*
ings, in which the whole was consumed, and
 so there was nothing left to feast on together;
 consequently, the true origin of Sacrifices
 must be accounted for, some other way, than
 from the custom of friends *eating and drink-*
ing together; though *feasting upon Sacrifices*
 might from thence be derived (p). It is ob-
 servable, that *burnt-offerings* were anciently
 used upon all occasions, and to serve all pur-
 poses.

O 2

(n) SYKES's Essay on the nature, design, and origin
 of Sacrifices. Page 73.

(o) Ibid. Page 334.

(p) Vid. HYGIN. Fab. Lib. II. Cap. 15. & JUR-
 EV. Critic. Hist. Vol. II. Tr. 9. Ch. 8.

poses (*q*). A thing unaccountable, if any other kind of Sacrifices were in use originally, from the first introduction of these sacred rites.—What seems to have led some Writers into a mistake upon this head is *this*, in that the offerings, which were presented to God, consisted of *eatables* and *drinkables*. But to this the answer is easy and obvious. For, since the Temple of God was his House, where he dwelt, as it were, amongst his subjects, according to a former Observation, it was agreeable to this condescending notion, that his table should be supplied with provision, partly for his own honour, and partly for the support of his immediate attendants. Besides, as the riches of the ancients consisted chiefly in their flocks and herds, together with the produce of the earth, it was natural for men in the rudest ages, to pay tribute, and to present offerings of such things to their Kings and Gods. Accordingly, the *Jews* made the like offerings to their King and God, under the notion of doing homage to him, and without being admitted to the familiarity of common guests in ordinary.

Therefore, I recur to my former Hypothesis, viz. that, as the Temple was the House of God, dedicated to his *service*, and dignified with his *Presence*, so it was a kind of

(*q*) Gen. viii. 20. Job i. 5. xlii. 8. Num. xxiii. 1, &c. See LOWMAN. Rational of the Heb. Ritual. Page 147.

of royal Palace, where he resided, as it were, to receive the homage, gifts, and offerings of his people, upon all occasions. This gives such a *ratio*, and assigns such a ground of Sacrifices, as equally extends to every kind of Sacrifice. Whereas, on the other hand, if we derive the *origin* of Sacrifices, from the custom of *friends eating and drinking together*, no account is, or can be given this way of those Sacrifices, which were wholly consumed upon the Altar, as in the case of *burnt-offerings*. And yet this kind of offerings, appear to have been the first and most ancient Sacrifices of all. Therefore, to some other original, than what hath been mentioned, they must necessarily be referred. And what can that be, but a divine Institution?

Though I have made use of the comparison between *royal presents*, and *sacred offerings*, by way of illustration, to point out the proper nature, use, and design, of Sacrifices, I am far from supposing, that the origin of Sacrifices is to be derived from any human customs whatsoever (though possibly some respect may be had to these things, under the *Jewish Theocracy*, in the *Hebrew Ritual*.) Because the same analogy may be preserved on supposition, that Sacrifices were originally appointed by God himself, as a kind of royalty, as a token and testimony of his Sovereignty, and of man's subjection ; whatever

further meaning they might have in the divine Institution. This to me appears to be the best account of those Sacrifices, or sacred offerings, which are first expressly mentioned in *Scripture*, I mean those of *Cain* and *Abel* (*r*).—Which undoubtedly, in respect to the latter, were *burnt-offerings* (*s*). For, how did it appear, that the *Lord* had respect to *Abel's* offering, and not to *Cain's*? I say, how did this appear so visibly, as to give the latter great offence (*t*)? Most probably, it was by consuming *Abel's* offering with fire from Heaven, according to God's usual manner of testifying his acceptance on the like occasions (*u*). “And (thus as one observes) “(*x*) the Lord had respect to *Abel*, in setting “on fire, and burning up his offering, by “a stream of glory from himself.” Therefore *Cain's* offering also was a *burnt-offering* in his own intention. Which, by the way, is a further confirmation of what hath been said before, concerning the nature of the first, and most ancient Sacrifices in the world.

In short, it seems very rational to think, that God gave to *Adam* a *Ritual* of Worship; and that the rite of Sacrifices, being so early in use, was part of the divine Ritual.

Nor

(*r*) Gen. iv. 3, 4.

(*s*) Vid. OUTRAM, de Sacrif. Lib. I. Cap. 10. S. 1.

(*t*) Gen. iv. 4, 5.

(*u*) Vid. AINSWORTH, and J. CLERIC. in loc.

(*x*) HUNT on Script. Revel. p. 35.

(y) Nor does it appear any ways unworthy of God, but, on the contrary, very congruous to his wisdom and goodness, to appoint such a rite from the beginning; particularly, as a tribute, and token of homage, paid to himself, the supreme Lord and Governor of the world. Besides, when this *King eternal* had been offended by man's *first disobedience*, but was willing to be reconciled, though he *spared not the Angels that fell*; did not this lay a proper foundation for *sin-offerings*, in the divine œconomy? I mean, as a publick testimony and signification of God's displeasure against sin, and of his compassion for sinners at the same time; (both to excite and to encourage their repentance at once, and so render them fit objects of pardoning mercy.) And likewise, as a memorial of the first *promise* of a Saviour, as a type of Christ, that *seed of the woman*, which was to *bruise the Serpent's head* (z); the *Lamb of God*, which *taketh away the sin of the world* (a); the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world* (b).

O 4

But

(y) See HALLET on Heb. xi. 4.

(z) Gen. iii. 15. (a) John i. 29.

(b) Rev. xiii. 8. Note—The other reading, which some prefer (See SYKES on Hebrews. Append. Page 248.) makes little alteration in the sense. For, according to their construction of the words, *the book of life, of the slain Lamb*, bears *date from the foundation of the world*. Which implies, that the death of Christ hath a *retrospect* view to the beginning of the world. A notion which seems to be confirmed by Heb. ix. 25, 26. See TAYLOR's Scripture Doctrine of Atonement. Pa. 134.

But it is time to return to our Text. *Ye are the Temple of the living God.* A Temple, as I have observed, was anciently and originally a Place dedicated to the honour and service of some Deity, and supposed to be favoured with the peculiar Presence of that same Deity which was there worshiped. Before I dismiss this head, it may be proper to add a few words concerning the *holiness of Places*, or the consecration of Temples, as having some connexion with the subject in hand. Now, the consecration or holiness of a Place consisted, not merely in it's being dedicated to a sacred use, but also, and chiefly, in it's being honoured with visible marks and tokens of a divine Presence. Thus, the ground was called *holy ground* (c), which adjoined to the *bush* where God appeared to *Moses* in a *flame of fire*; the usual token and symbol of the divine Presence. Thus also mount *Sinai*, and mount *Zion*, were called holy for the like reason (d). Thus again, the mount of *Transfiguration* is called the holy mount (e), because of the divine Appearance, and *excellent Glory*, which was there seen. Once more, the *Tabernacle* and *Temple* was holy, because it was consecrated by the *cloud of Glory*, the symbol of God's peculiar Presence, who *dwelt between the Cherubim* (f). Therefore the reason is very plain and obvious, why there is
not

(c) Exod. iii. 5.

(e) 2 Pet. i. 18.

(d) Psal. lxxviii. 17. ii. 6,

(f) 1 Sam. iv. 4.

not the same holiness in Places *now*, that there was under the Old Testament Dispensation; viz. because no particular Places are now distinguished and consecrated with the visible external signs and tokens of the divine Presence. I shall only add here—"It was not necessary, that the rays of the divine Glory, should *always* visibly appear in the Sanctuary. For God, by once entering into the Sanctuary, signified, that he took possession of it for his Habitation. There he would put his name; and there his eyes, and his heart should be continually, as he said (*g*). And so there he dwelt, until, in a more excellent manner, he removed his residence into his spiritual Temple, the Christian Church."

II. This leads us to the next thing proposed. Therefore having finished our enquiry into the proper notion, use, and design of a Temple, I shall from thence take occasion to shew, in what respect Christians are the Temple of the living God.

This name, the *living God*, is the proper title and character of the one true God, as distinguished from false Gods, and particularly from *dead and dumb Idols*, or deified dead men. Says the Apostle, (*b*) *We preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, who made Heaven,*

(*g*) 1 Kings ix. 3.

(*b*) Acts xiv. 15.

ven, and Earth, and the Sea, and all things that are therein. And again, (i) *How ye turned unto God from Idols, to serve the living and true God.* Therefore, if Christians are the Temple of the living God, they are consequently the Temple of the only true God; for these are different names or terms, to express one and the same thing. Accordingly St. Paul tells the Ephesians, (k) *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the household of God. And are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone: In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord. In whom you also are builded together for an Habitation of God, through the Spirit.* A more glorious Temple, than the famous Temple of Diana, great Diana of the Ephesians (l). To the same purpose St. Peter, speaking of Christ, says, (m) *To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious; ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual House, an holy Priesthood, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ.*

Taking it then for granted, upon such authorities, that Christians are the Temple of the living God, I proceed to enquire, in what

(i) 1 Theff. i. 9.

(l) Acts xix. 34.

(k) Eph. ii. 19—22.

(m) 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

what *respect* they are so. To which end, let it be observed,

(1.) Christians are dedicated to the *honour* and *service* of God, who hath a special *propriety* in them. *For ye are the Temple of the living God.* It follows, *as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* “I will be their God, and they shall be my “people.” The same sentiment is more fully expressed in the following words. (n) *What, know ye not that your body is the Temple of the holy Ghost? Which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* Their being bought with a price, meaning, doubtless, the *precious blood of Christ*, seems to be properly mentioned here, in connexion with their being the Temple of God. For, as the *Tabernacle* was sprinkled with Blood, at the time of it's dedication, (o) so the *Temple* was dedicated with solemn *Sacrifices* (p). In like manner, the first dedication of God's living Temple, the Christian Church, was made by the offering of Christ, (q) who put up the Prayer of *Consecration* a little before his death (r). But this foundation being laid, Christians are personally de-
dicated

(n) 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

(o) Heb. ix. 21.

(p) 1 Kings viii. 62, 63.

(q) Heb. x. 10.

(r) John xvii.

dedicated to God in *Baptism*, when they are baptized *in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, according to Christ's Institution and Command (s). Now this form of Baptism, naturally imports a solemn dedication to God, of the party baptized, under the *Christian Dispensation*; that religious Dispensation, which the Father delivered to the world by the *Son*, and confirmed by the *holy Ghost*. In which view we may understand and apply those words of the Apostle, (t) *Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify*, (that is, *dedicate*, or *consecrate* it, to the service of God; as the word *sanctify* commonly signifies in Scripture language) *and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish*.

(2.) As Christians are *dedicated* to the honour and service of God, so they are favoured with his *special Presence*. As God hath said, *I will dwell in them, and walk in them* (u). Christian Believers are *built together for an Habitation of God, through the Spirit*.

As the *faith* of Christians is grounded upon the *demonstration of the Spirit* (x), clearly evincing the truth and divine authority of
the

(s) Matt. xxviii. 19.

(t) Eph. v. 25, 26, 27.

(u) Levit. xxvi. 12.

(x) 1 Cor. ii. 4.

the Gospel, by those miraculous gifts and powers, which accompanied it's first publication, and are still a standing proof of it's being a Revelation from God; so the holy Spirit was conferred upon the Christian Church, at the begining, in such an extraordinary measure and manner, as plainly discovered a peculiar *divine Presence*. But it was not necessary that the same extraordinary gifts should be always continued in the Church of Christ; any more than that the *cloud of Glory* should always have been seen hovering over the Temple. At the dedication of Solomon's Temple, *it came to pass, when the Priests were come out of the holy Place, that the cloud filled the House of the Lord. So that the Priests could not stand to minister, because of the cloud; for the Glory of the Lord had filled the House of the Lord (y)*. Thus, God took possession of the Temple, as his House and Habitation; by the visible tokens of his special Presence, he hallowed that House, to put his name there for ever, as a pledge, that his eyes and his heart should be there continually (z). In like manner, at the erection of the Christian Church, this Temple was hallowed, and consecrated by a special divine Presence, gloriously manifested in the wonderful gifts, powers, and operations of the holy Spirit. Now, this was a plain intimation of God's perpetual Presence with the Church of Christ,

“ that

(y) 1 Kings vii. 10, 11.

(z) 1 Kings ix. 3.

“ that he would put his name there for ever,
 “ that his eyes and his heart should be there
 “ continually ;” though the same extraordinary gifts should not be continued, but cease in after ages.

Besides, if these extraordinary gifts are now withdrawn, yet, as a token and pledge of God’s gracious Presence, the blessed *fruits* and effects of the said spiritual gifts, still remain in the Christian Church unto this day. For, that divine Revelation, which was at first communicated and confirmed by a divine Inspiration, is transmitted down to us in the sacred Scriptures. Unto us are *committed the Oracles of God*. And thus, *the House of God, which is the Church of the living God*, may be called the *pillar and ground of truth* (a). It is the repository of sacred truth, enriched with the benefit, as well as intrusted with the care, of this inestimable *treasure*, the truth of God. This heavenly truth imparts to us that knowledge of God, which under the *ordinary* aids and influences of the *holy Spirit*, assured *to them that ask him* (b), hath a strong tendency to purify our bodies, and to transform our souls into the divine image and likeness ; a tendency to *make us partakers of a divine nature* (c). Now, when the moral image of God is fairly formed in the soul, reflected *in the face of*
Jesus

(a) 1 Tim. iii. 15.

(b) Luke xi. 13.

(c) 2 Pet. i. 4.

Jesus Christ, or the glass of the Gospel (*d*), is not this a kind of *Shechinah*, and the best and brightest evidence to ourselves, of a *divine Presence*? But we want no *cloud of Glory* to convince us, that God is with us, if we have God within us. Thus then, every holy man, and true Christian, is a little Temple of God (as Christians in a body are his great Temple) enshrined with his image, filled with his glory, and blessed with his divinest Presence.

Moreover, as Jesus Christ, by his Father's appointment, is at the head of the administration in the Kingdom of God, so he hath not only declared to his Church in general, (*e*) *Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world*; but he hath likewise said, (*f*) *Where two or three are gathered together, in my Name, there am I in the midst of them*. The true worshipers are those, who worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth (*g*). And all such worshipers may comfortably expect God's gracious Presence every where, at all times, and in all places. This privilege the Evangelical Prophet seems to have foretold with an eye to the Christian Church, the spiritual Zion. (*h*) *And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming*

(*d*) 2 Cor. iii. 18. iv. 4—6. (*e*) Matt. xxviii. 20.
 (*f*) Matt. xviii. 20. (*g*) John iv. 23.
 (*h*) Isa. iv. 5.

flaming fire by night. Where we have a plain description of the *cloud of Glory*, that sacred symbol of the divine Presence, which appeared at the Tabernacle, and the Temple. But, whereas it was formerly confined to those Places, the Prophet signifies, that the peculiar manifestations of God's Presence should be limited to no one particular Place, but equally extend to all the Dwellings and Assemblies in *Zion*, or the Christian Church. Therefore, *Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men; and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God (i).*

I shall conclude with some Reflections upon the Subject.

(1.) From hence we learn, the necessity of *Christian Unity*. For, as a Temple is a Building regular and compact, so Christians are said to be *builded together, for an Habitation of God, through the Spirit (k)*. But then, they are built *upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone (l)* It is therefore a Scripture Unity, or, an Unity fixed upon Scripture Grounds, that Christians are obliged to cultivate and maintain among themselves. *And as many as walk according to this Rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God (m).*

(2.) We

(i) Rev. xxi. 3.

(l) Ver. 20.

(k) Eph. ii. 22.

(m) Gal. vi. 16.

(2.) We may further infer from hence, the obligation of *separating* from an idolatrous Church. For, as Temples were anciently devoted to the service and worship of the Deities, whose names they bare, so Christians, as the Apostle is here arguing, being the Temple of the living God, are obliged, by their very profession, to serve and worship him alone. Therefore, if any Church hath set up other *objects* of worship, besides the true God, which is a breach of the *first* Commandment; or worship the true God himself, after an *idolatrous manner*, which is a breach of the *second* Commandment, and a degree of Idolatry, as any material image of God, like the *golden Calf*, is an Idol; (n) in this case, *come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you; and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (o)*. Therefore blessed be the memory of our great Reformers, who seem to have paid a proper regard to this voice of God; and, in so doing, have set us a worthy example, that should animate us all to follow their steps.

(3.) Christians are indispensibly obliged to maintain the greatest *purity* of heart and life. For, as the Apostle himself hath urged the matter home, (p) *Know ye not, that ye are*

(n) Acts vii. 41.

(o) 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

(p) 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

the Temple of God; and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the Temple of God is holy, which Temple ye are. Having therefore these promises (as he adds here) (q) dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. "In the fear of God;" i. e. in humble reverence and awe of the indwelling Deity. For the Lord is in his holy Temple; and holiness becomes his House for ever. This qualification is necessary for the worshipers of God at all times, in all ages, and under all religious dispensations; but more especially the *Christian*, which is the purest, the most spiritual, and the most perfect Institution, that was ever delivered to the world. Therefore be upon your guard against profaning the Temple of God, and defiling his Sanctuary, by any sinful passions or practices whatsoever, by any *filthiness of flesh*, or of *spirit*. See that ye keep yourselves from all *pollutions of Idols*, even spiritual Idols. For, if you make an Idol of any thing in this world, whether it be sensual pleasure, or worldly gain, or human applause; it will corrupt your temper, and betray you into a wrong behaviour towards the *living God*. Thus, *Covetousness* is termed *Idolatry*, in his holy word (r). And may not the same thing be properly said of *sensuality*; when persons are
lovers

(q) 2 Cor. vii. 1.

(r) Col. iii. 5.

lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God (s)? Also pride and ambition deserves no better a name in those, who love the praise of men more than the praise of God (t). For, in this case men idolize themselves and one another; and so they will stick at nothing, but, without any scruple, sacrifice honour and conscience, when these things stand in the way to worldly preferments. So necessary it is, that we abstain from spiritual sins, as well as from fleshly vices.

(4.) How should we admire and adore the condescending goodness of God, in deigning to have a Temple amongst men! *Will God, indeed, dwell on the earth? Behold, the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain Thee (u), great Jehovah! Yet (amazing condescension) thou hast graciously declared, (x) to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.* What thanks and praises are justly due to God, for all the wonderful steps that were taken to build up the Christian Church, and erect this sacred Temple to his name! To this end, in the Person of Christ, *the word was made flesh, and dwelt (or tabernacled) among us (says St. John the Evangelist) (y) (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace*
P 2 and

(s) 2 Tim. iii. 4.

(t) John xii. 43.

(u) 1 Kings viii. 27.

(x) Isa. lxvi. 2.

(y) John i. 14.

and truth. And (as St. Paul observes) (y) without controversy, great was the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the Flesh (i. e. in the Temple of Christ's body (z); as before he had been manifested, in the cloud of Glory) (a) justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up into Glory (b). Such then is the great and glorious foundation of the Christian Church, or the Temple of God under the Gospel. And other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ (c). To whom coming as unto a living stone—Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual House, an holy Priesthood, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ (d), the High Priest of our profession (e); who by one offering, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (f). And as he hath an unchangeable Priesthood, he is able also to save them to the uttermost (or evermore) that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession

(y) 1 Tim. iii. 16.

(z) John ii. 19.

(a) See LOWMAN on the divine Appearances.

(b) Note—As all those religious *mysteries*, to which the Apostle seems here to allude, had relation to some *Deity*; this circumstance, I think, supercedes all the attempts that have been made to alter the common reading of the Place. For, how could he properly describe the *mystery*, the *great mystery of godliness*, without making mention of a *God*, at least, in the popular sense of the word? Vid. GOTHEFRID. in loc. POL. Synops.

(c) 1 Cor. iii. 11.

(d) 1 Pet. ii. 4. 5.

(e) Heb. iii. 1.

(f) Heb. x. 14.

tion for them (g). By him therefore let us offer the Sacrifice of Praise to God continually, for all the riches of his Grace. But to do good and communicate, in imitation of the divine goodness, forget not; for with such Sacrifices God is well-pleased still (h). Finally, I beseech you, Brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies (or persons) a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (i); and the noblest use you can possibly make of your rational powers and faculties. One word more let me add, with an eye to the case of guilty creatures (too common a case, alas,) in the language of a great Penitent (k) The Sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

(g) Heb. vii. 24, 25. Note—If this be *Jewish* language, it hath a *Christian* meaning; and that must be it's true meaning, in the Apostle's intention, which the *Hebrews* would naturally put upon it; for he could have no design to lead them into a mistake.

(h) Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

(i) Rom. xii. 1.

(k) Psal. li. 17.





DISCOURSE X.

Christ, through Death, destroying the fatal power of Death.



HEB. ii. 14, 15.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise, took part of the same; that, through Death, he might destroy him that had the power of Death, that is, the Devil; and deliver them, who, through fear of Death, were all their life-time subject to bondage.

THE Author of this excellent *Epistle*, or *Discourse* (a) to the *Hebrews*, who is commonly, and I think, properly supposed to be *St. Paul*,

(a) Note—It is called a *word of exhortation*, (Chap. xiii. 22.) the name given to a Synagogue Sermon. Acts xiii. 15. And it begins in the same manner as *St. Paul* began his *word of exhortation*, on the occasion there mentioned, viz. with the ancient intercourse between God and their Fathers. Heb. i. 1. Acts xiii. 16, 17.

St. Paul, (b) having set forth the superior dignity, and authority of Christ above both men and angels, in the preceding Chapter, proceeds to obviate two grand mistakes of the Jews concerning the *Messias*, at the ninth Verse of this Chapter, saying, *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the Angels*, (according to a fore-mentioned prophecy) (c) *for the suffering of Death, crowned with glory and honour; that he, by the grace of God, should taste Death for every man*. For, as the Jews imagined that the benefits of the *Messias* should be confined chiefly to themselves, so they had a notion that *Christ abideth for ever* (d), and so was never to die at all. Both which errors the Apostle refutes, by observing, that *Jesus, the Christ*, was not only to suffer Death, but also that, *by the grace of God, he should taste Death for every man*. For, (as it follows in the next Verse, by way of confirmation) *it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings*. There was a certain fitness and congruity in the thing, worthy of divine Wisdom and Goodness, in respect both of end and means. This reason is supported by another, founded

P 4

in

(b) See Dr. LARDNER's *Credibility*, &c. Part II. Supplement Vol. II.

(c) Ver. 6—8. Psal. viii. 4, &c.

(d) John xii. 32.

in Scripture Prophecies (e). From whence the Apostle draws the following conclusion in the Text, *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, &c.* The fitness and propriety of which divine Dispensation, is manifest from the nature and quality of the persons, whom Christ came to redeem and save. For, as the Apostle adds, (f) *Verily, he took not on him the nature of Angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham;* that is, to save all true Believers, who by faith and obedience, became the *spiritual* seed, and children of *Abraham*. Wherefore (as the Apostle goes on with his argument) *in all things it behoved him, to be made like unto his Brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, &c.*

But to return to the words of our Text, which present us with the following Observations.

I. The Devil *had* the power of Death.

II. Some persons, through fear of Death, were all their life-time subject to bondage. And,

III. In order to *destroy* the one, and to *deliver* the other, through Death, Christ also, as well as they, partook of flesh and blood.

I. *The*

(e) Ver. 11—13.

(f) Ver. 16, &c.

I. *The Devil had the power of Death.* But in what respect he had so, is a proper subject of inquiry. And here let me observe,

1. Negatively. The Devil cannot be supposed to have had the power of Death, in the same sense that a person is said amongst us to have the *power of Life and Death*. For upon that supposition, the Devil would have been invested with such a power, as encroached upon the prerogative of God, the Sovereign Lord of Life and Death, who killeth, and maketh alive. Nor can it reasonably be thought, that the Devil is made God's *agent* and executioner, in the inflicting of Death universally upon all mankind. For, the Apostle's way of speaking, does not imply any proper *right*, or *legal authority*, either delegated, or justly acquired. And though the Devil may be the instrument of Providence, in visiting men with Diseases and Death, as well as with other Calamities, upon some occasions; it is not conceivable, that Death, universally considered, or under that extensive notion, in which the Apostle must be understood to speak of it here in the Text, should be left to the Devil's ordering and disposal.

It is true, some of the Jewish Writers make mention of the *Angel of Death*, who they represent as an *evil Angel*. And to this notion, perhaps, the Apostle may be fancied

to allude, in speaking of the Devil, as having *had the power of Death*. But the Jews say such odd things about the *Angel of Death*, by them called *Samael*, as strongly favour of fable and fiction. And it is plain, on the contrary, that something else must be intended here, by the Devil's having the power of Death, than his inflicting Death upon mankind. Because, we see Death is inflicted upon mankind still, from age to age. So that in *this* respect, the Devil's power of Death would now appear to be as great as ever it was, in any former period of time. But this notion agrees not, either to the drift of the Apostle's discourse, or to the manner and form of his expression; at least, as our Translators understood his language. For *so* we read the words, *Him that had, not hath, the power of Death, that is, the Devil*.

So much then for the negative view of the question. I proceed now to consider the matter,

2. Positively. And in my opinion, the Devil might properly enough be said to have had the power of Death in a two-fold respect, viz. (1.) In respect of his *agency*, in first *introducing* Death into the world. And (2.) with regard to the *use*, which he made of Death afterwards, to serve his own ends and occasions thereby.

(1.) In respect to his *agency*, in first introducing Death into the world. Through the
subtilty

subtilty of this *old Serpent*, our first Parents were deceived into that transgression, which violated the law of Innocency, and incurred the penalty of Death, intailing it, as an inheritance, upon all their posterity (*g*). This view of the case corresponds very well with the design of the Apostle in the Text. Where you may observe “ a plain *antithesis* between “ Christ and the Devil; the one being considered as the Author of Life and Salvation; “ the other as the Author of Death and Destruction (*h*).” Says an ancient Writer, (*i*) “ God created Man to be *immortal*, and “ made him to be *an Image of his own Eternity*. Nevertheless, through *envy of the “ Devil*, Death came into the world, &c.” And thus, as *Death reigns* over all the children of men with an universal sway (*k*), so this fatal empire of Death had for it’s *founder*, the Devil. Therefore he may not improperly be said to have had the power of Death, in respect of his *agency*, in *first* introducing Death into the world; in which respect he was a murderer from the beginning (*l*). And also,

(2.) With regard to the *use*, which he made of it *afterwards*, to serve his own ends and

(*g*) Rom. v. 12.

(*h*) See Mr. PEIRCE in loc.

(*i*) Wisdom of SOLOMON, Chap. ii. 23, 24.

(*k*) Rom. v. 14, &c. 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

(*l*) John viii. 44.

and occasions thereby. This notion of the thing is not only consistent with the former, but naturally and easily results from it. For, is it not natural to suppose, that the *subtlety* of Satan had some crafty design to serve, by introducing Death into the world? A design equally injurious to the honour of God, and the happiness of man. Accordingly, this further notion (though, perhaps, generally overlooked) fairly arises from the Text, if we attend to the force of the original words. For, that similar phrase in the Greek Historian (*m*), the *power*, or sovereignty, of the *sea*, denotes a power, in them that have it, to occupy the sea, and make use of it, for their own conveniency and advantage, without any interruption from others. In like manner, the Devil might be said to have *had* κράτος τοῦ Θανάτου, *the power*, or sovereignty, of *Death*, on a parallel account, and because he made use of Death to serve his own occasions by it. And as this sentiment is naturally suggested by the language of the Apostle, so let me further observe, it agrees with *matter of fact*. For, the *dread* and terror of *Death* seems to have been the Devil's most powerful and successful engine, to enslave mankind in the darker ages of the world, and before *life and immortality was brought to light, through the Gospel*. And surely nothing can be conceived to have a worse effect,

or

(*m*) κράτος θαλάσσης. Thucyd. Lib. I,

or a more fatal influence upon their *minds* and *manners* at once, than the certain awful prospect of Death, without any rational hope, or well grounded assurance of another, and *better* life. This matter will receive some further illustration from what will be said under the next head of Discourse. I proceed therefore to the second *Observation* from the Text.

II. *Some persons, through fear of Death, were all their life-time subject to bondage.* Now, those persons are supposed to have been chiefly unenlightened *Heathens*; though some amongst the *Jews* also, particularly the *Sadducees*, were in no better condition. But, in what respect were they, through fear of Death, all their life-time subject to bondage? To this I answer. The fear of Death was itself a sort of bondage to those persons, who had little or no solid hopes of a better life; and it had likewise a tendency to subject them to the further bondage of *sin and Satan*.

I. The fear of Death was *itself* a sort of bondage to those persons, who had little or no solid hopes of a better life. And this was eminently the case with the Gentile World, to which the words before us are thought to have a particular reference. The *seed of Abraham*, mentioned in the next Verse, that is to say, his *spiritual seed*, is an expression which looks the same way; according to the known

known import of that phrase in St. Paul's writings (n). With an eye to the same persons, I mean the unenlightened Heathens, he tells the *Theſſalonians*, (o) *I would not have you to be ignorant, Brethren, concerning them that are aſleep, that ye ſorrow not, even as others, who have no hope.* And writing to the *Ephesians*, the ſame Apoſtle ſays, (p) *Wherefore, remember that ye, being in time paſt Gentiles in the fleſh, &c. that at that time, ye were without Chriſt, being aliens from the common-wealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers from the covenants of promiſe, having no hope, and without God in the world.*

Now, I ſay, to perſons under theſe dark circumſtances, the fear of Death was *itſelf* a ſort of bondage. For, there is a *ſpirit of bondage unto fear* (q). And conſidering that the *love of life* is one of the ſtrongeſt, as well as wiſeſt inſtincts of nature, it is rational to ſuppoſe, that ſuch a gloomy proſpect of Death, as hath been deſcribed, muſt have greatly depressed men's ſpirits, and enſlaved their minds. Accordingly, Death is pronounced, by one of their moſt celebrated Philoſophers, *the moſt terrible of terrible things*. “ Death, ſays he, (r) is the moſt terrible “ thing, becauſe it is an utter end; and no-
“ thing

(n) Rom. iv. 16—18. Gal. iii. 7, 8.

(o) 1 Theſſ. iv. 13.

(p) Eph. ii. 11, 12.

(q) Rom. viii. 5.

(r) ARISTOT. Ethic. Nicom. Lib. III. Cap. 6.

“ thing, either good or bad, seems to be allotted for a dead man.” And says CICE-RO (s), “ All the tranquility and comfort of human life, is destroyed in a manner by the fear of Death.” LUCRETIVS too acknowledges (t), that “ the *vulnera vitæ*, as he calls the *troubles of life*, are nourished in a great measure by the *fear of Death*.” But the method of relief, which he prescribed in this case, will not answer the end, or cure the evil complained of. For, as PLUTARCH hath shewn, “ There is no *living comfortably* upon the maxims of the *Epæcurean Philosophy*.” In which Treatise, he hath also this remark ; (u) “ The fear of Death annoys both young and old.” And another says, (x) “ Death is a dreadful Evil.” Thus *Poets, Orators, and Philosophers*, all agree in the same story, declaring with one voice, that *Death* is the *King of Terrors* ; as it is more elegantly expressed in holy Writ. (y) Therefore the fear of Death was *itself* a sort of bondage to those persons, who had little or no solid hopes of a better life. But besides this,

2. The fear of Death, under these circumstances, had a tendency to subject men to the further bondage of *sin* and *Satan*. And thus,
through

(s) De Finib. Lib. I. (t) Lib. III.

(u) PLUTARCH. Op. Vol. II. Page 1105.

(x) EURIPID. Iphigen. in Aul.

(y) Job xviii. 14.

through fear of Death, as the proper instrumental or influencing *cause*, they *were all their life-time subject to bondage*, the worst bondage that could possibly be. The truth of this Observation may be illustrated and confirmed, with respect both to *Religion* and *Morals*.

(1.) As to Religion. Did not men's dark and melancholy fears of this kind, easily dispose their minds to receive any *superstitious* and gloomy *impression*? The passion of fear, when strongly agitated, is apt to shatter and cloud the Understanding. So that a *spirit of fear* is properly placed in opposition to a *sound mind* (2). When persons are once governed by their Passions or Imaginations, instead of sound Reason and Judgement, one may readily conceive, into what errors and follies they must be liable to fall, even in the affair of Religion itself. Nay, Religion, true Religion, being, in it's own nature, the most rational thing that can be, the less regard men have to right Reason, in forming their notions of it, so much greater is their danger of mistaking it. But of all passions and affections, that are apt to unhinge the human mind, none is more violent than the passion of *fear*; and of all fears, the *fear of Death* is the strongest, when left to it's full scope.

Accordingly, this very fear of Death hath, in fact, produced the most strange and wonderful

(2) 2 Tim. i. 7.

derful effects in superstitious minds. And I am prone to think, that a great part of the Gentile (a) *Demon-dread*, or Heathen Superstition, may be accounted for in this way. And thus, many corruptions in Religion might take their rise at first from nothing else, but a slavish fear of Death. By which means, the prince of darkness came to erect his empire in the world, upon the ruins of true rational Religion. And so, as was hinted before, the Devil might be said to have *had the power of Death*, as he served his own ends by it, and abused men's fears of Death, in such manner, as to enslave them in the bondage of Superstition.

Besides what hath been suggested upon this head, it is further to be observed, that when any superstitious rites and customs were once established, and held sacred, it was a *dangerous* thing to *oppose* them. So that the fear of Death, and of *capital punishment* from men, was a great mean of *continuing* the bondage of Superstition, after it had received the public sanction. Hence it was, that many of the wiser Heathen, who secretly disliked the vain and idle Superstitions of the vulgar, had not the courage to attempt a reformation. So that in them was verified St. CHRYSOSTOM's Remark upon the Text, viz. that
 “ those, who fear Death are slaves ; because
 Q “ they

(a) Δεισιδαιμονίας Acts xxv. 19.

“ they will comply, and submit to any thing
 “ that they may escape it.”

(2.) In relation to *common Morality*. Had not the fear of Death, under the circumstances aforesaid, a bad influence upon the practice of *sobriety* and *virtue*? Did not the *shortness* of this life, together with the *uncertainty*, or *disbelief* of a better, tempt and cause men to indulge their sensual appetites and passions, with more freedom, and less restraint? Undoubtedly it did. Witness that *Epicurean Rant*, (*b*) *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*. Nor was this the language only of lewd and drunken Poets (*c*). For, the same maxim was adopted by persons, who made great pretences to wisdom; e. g. the *Egyptians*, amongst whom, we are told, (*d*)
 “ it was a custom, at their public entertain-
 “ ments, to bring in a Death’s Head, and
 “ shew it to every guest; telling him at the
 “ same time (I suppose not to *blunt*, but to
 “ whet and sharpen his appetite) *drink and*
 “ *be merry*; for thou shalt be such an one
 “ as this at Death.” — Now, if *self-duties* were so ill practised, no wonder that *social*, and relative *duties* were no better performed under the same circumstances. For the things of this world, are the *things which the Gen-
 tiles*

(*b*) 1 Cor. xv. 32.

(*c*) Vid. HORAT. Carm. Lib. I. Od. xi, &c. MARTIAL. Epigram. Lib. II. 52.

(*d*) Vid. HERODOT. Euterp.

tiles seek (e). And those men, whose views and affections wholly terminate upon the things of this present life, the inordinate love of which is the root of all evil, are not likely to make any conscience of the great duties, they owe one to another. Hence we find *unrighteousness, covetousness, envy, deceit, violence*, and other kindred vices, set down in the Apostle's black catalogue of sins, which reigned in the Heathen World (*f*).

For a further account of the bad effect, which the certain prospect of Death, without the hopes of a better life, had upon mankind, I might refer you to the second Chapter of the *book of Wisdom*, cited before. For, though it belongs to the *Apocrypha*, which is not of the same authority with the Canonical Books of *Scripture*, as the *Jews* themselves acknowledge (g) ; yet, being a book of greater antiquity, it may be presumed to give us a truer account of the sentiments and opinions of the ancient *Jews*, especially if it was written by a Jew, than can be expected from their later Rabbins. This I remark by the way; as not improper to be mentioned in the present case, on supposition the Apostle might allude in the Text, to any notions that were common and current amongst the Jews, in his time, concerning *Death*, or the *Devil's power of Death*.

Q 2 Thus

(e) Matt. vi. 32.

(f) Rom. i. 29.

(g) Vid. JOSEPH. Lib. I.

Thus have I endeavoured to illustrate the *two* first Observations from the Text, viz. that the Devil had the power of Death; and some persons, through fear of Death, were all their life-time subject to bondage. I now proceed to the *third* and last Observation, viz.

III. In order to *destroy* the one, and *deliver* the other, through Death, Christ also as well as they, *partook of flesh and blood*. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of *flesh and blood*, he also himself likewise *partook of the same*; that through Death, &c. Under this head it is proper to inquire, in what respect Christ was designed to *destroy* the one, and to *deliver* the other. And then shew the fitness and propriety of his *partaking of flesh and blood*, in order, *through Death*, to accomplish this design.

1st. Let us inquire, in what respect Christ was designed to *destroy* the one, and to *deliver* the other.

(1.) As to the former; Christ was designed to *destroy the Devil*, not in his *essence*, but his *influence*, and as he *had the power of Death*. By introducing Death into our world, this great enemy of mankind proposed, no doubt, to intail it irrecoverably, and irreversibly upon the whole human race; that so he might tyrannize and triumph over them, from age to age, and from one generation to another.

But

But this malicious design, Christ was to frustrate and defeat ; and so far *destroy him that had the power of Death*. For this purpose, says the Apostle, *(b) the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil*. And thus was that ancient promise, or prediction fulfilled, *(i) namely, that the seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's Head ; that is, defeat his policy, and destroy his power at once*.

(2.) As to the *latter* ; Christ was designed to *deliver them*, by setting them at liberty from the double bondage, before described ; that is, from the *slavish*, and *enslaving fear of Death*. For, having so *abolished Death*, as to disarm it of all it's terrors, the fear of Death cannot now terrify the minds of men, or corrupt their manners, as it did before *Life and Immortality was brought to light, through the Gospel (k)*.

II^d. It will not be difficult to discern the *fitness and propriety* of Christ's *partaking of flesh and blood*, in order, *through Death*, to accomplish this design. This matter may be easily made out, by a plain introduction of particulars, in the following manner.

(1.) Christ's *partaking of flesh and blood*, was a prerequisite and preparatory step to his Death. For, if he had assumed the immortal

Q 3

nature

(b) 1 John iii. 8.

(i) Gen. iii. 15.

(k) 2 Tim. i. 10.

nature of Angels, he could not have been subject to Death. That is plain.

(2.) The *Death* of Christ was a necessary leading step to his *Resurrection*. For, I need not tell you, that Christ could not have risen from the dead, unless he had first died ; according to one of his own beautiful and apt similitudes. *(l) Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

(3.) The Resurrection of Christ from the dead, is a sure and certain pledge of a general Resurrection of the dead, and particularly of a Resurrection of the *pious* dead to eternal life. For, *as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive (m). Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures (n). And as he was delivered for our offences ; so he rose again for our justification (o) ; justification of life (p) ;* and to remove the penalty of Death from us, by suffering it himself. And thus, in dying, and rising again from the dead, Christ acted, not as a private, but as a public Person, as the second *Adam*, as the Redeemer and Restorer of a lost world. To come to the point in view.

(4.) The blessed hope of eternal life, and a glorious immortality, is a sovereign antidote against the terrors of Death, and the tyranny

(l) John xii. 24.

(n) 1 Cor. xv. 3.

(p) Rom. v. 18.

(m) 1 Cor. xv. 22.

(o) Rom. iv. 25.

ranny of the Devil. Because it rescues mankind from that *slavish fear* of *Death*, which was the fatal mean of *enslaving* them in the wretched bondage of Superstition and Vice. Thus, *the Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope (as a suitable and sufficient motive to the practice of all piety and virtue) and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (q).*

I shall conclude this Discourse with the following Reflections.

1. The introduction of Death by *man's first disobedience*, made a great alteration in his original state; the state, not only of his body, but thereby of his mind also. How far this one circumstance of mortality, might affect the *inward temper* and disposition of the fallen creature, and prove the *occasion*, though not the *necessary* cause, of much disorder and irregularity in his passions and affections; according to the representation of an ancient Christian Writer (r); and how far the liableness of all mankind to Death,

Q 4

may

(q) Tit. ii. 11—14.

(r) St. CHRYSOST. in Rom. vii.

may have had the like effect upon them in every succeeding age ; a thorough insight into human Nature might help us to determine. And if we could account for the common degeneracy of mortal men, in this way, (as it is plain, I think, from what hath been said, it may be accounted for, at least, in part) the hypothesis would seem to be more intelligible, and less exceptionable than some others. There is one Remark I would make, as pertinent to the case in hand. Among the various accounts, given by Theological Writers, of the *Image of God*, supposed to be lost by the fall of man, there is one thing little taken notice of by modern Divines, but which entered into the notion of the said divine Image in former days ; I mean, the *privilege of Immortality*. For, says that Apocryphal Writer, whose words I had occasion to mention before, (s) “ God created man “ to be immortal, and made him to be an “ *Image of his own Eternity* (t).”

(2.) The great and gracious design of the Gospel, is, to direct men's views and expectations to a coming world, and to influence their temper and practice, according to that same direction. Because this present world is now become, on sundry accounts, an improper

(s) Wisdom of SOLOMON, Chap. ii. 23.

(t) Note—The book of Wisdom, Chap. vii. ver. 24. is quoted by CLEM. Alexand. Strom. Lib. V. Pa. 591. Lut.

proper place for happiness. But where there is no prospect of happiness, there can be no sufficient motives, or inducements to holiness; and so, in that situation, the interest of Religion must inevitably sink, and die of course. Therefore, to prevent so great a calamity from befalling the human race, the *gracious purpose* of God, for saving a lost world, is now made manifest, by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel (u). And for my own part I suspect, the Religion of Jesus will never be rightly understood, and much less practised as it ought to be, till the heads and hearts of Christians take a more thorough turn *this way*; and we are all brought to look upon Christianity, as a religious System, wisely framed and calculated, to advance the moral kingdom of God among men, by the blessed hope of future happiness and glory; because this present world is become a scene of misery and desolation, in consequence of man's Apostacy.

I say, in consequence of man's Apostacy; for, otherwise, I do not see, why *this* world, as it came out of the hands of God, might not have been an Heaven upon Earth; if Sin had never entered into it; without the necessity, the strange necessity of shifting states,
and

(u) 2 Tim. i. 9, 10.

and changing worlds, in quest of happiness. But Sin did enter, and Death entered with it, (x) and a long train of other Evils. Thus the fallen world groans under the weight of it's own ruins; and a speedy end is put to all human glory and felicity, in *this* dark state of Mortality! Where then is happiness to be found? And where is the place of happiness for the sons of mortal men? Not surely, in a ruined world! Not in a world under a curse! A dying world! No; it must be in some new world; in some other and better life; where accordingly we are directed to seek for happiness, under the conduct of the *Prince of Life, the Captain of our Salvation*, who is appointed to *lead many sons unto Glory*.

Let us, with God's assistance, list ourselves under the standard of Christ, and fight manfully under his banner against Sin, the World, and the Devil; *putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation* (y). Being strongly fortified against all the temptations of Life, and all the terrors of Death, by the christian hope of glory, honour, and immortality; let us not indulge a *spirit of bondage unto fear*; and much less become vile slaves to *any sensual lusts, which war against the soul* (z);
but,

(x) Rom. v. 12.

(y) 1 Thess. v. 8.

(z) 1 Pet. ii. 11.

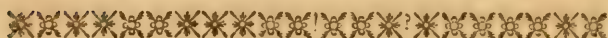
but, let us *assert* our liberty, and breathe a *spirit of liberty*, the glorious liberty of the *sons of God*, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance. Finally, *my beloved Brethren*, be ye *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, forasmuch as ye know, that your labour will not be in vain in the Lord.





DISCOURSE XI.

Christ risen, the first Fruits of them
that sleep.



I COR. XV. 20.

*But now is Christ risen from the Dead, and
become the first fruits of them that slept.*

IN this Chapter, from the known
important fact of Christ's Resur-
rection, St. Paul is arguing and
proving the doctrine of a general
Resurrection of the dead, particularly, of the
pious dead. Because, it seems, there were
*some, among the Christians at Corinth, who
said, there is no Resurrection of the Dead (a).*
Who those persons were, we are not told.
But, if we suppose them to be sprung from
the Sect of the *Sadducees*, or of the *Epicu-
reans*, both which held, that the soul perish-
ed with the body, and so denied a future
state of existence absolutely; upon this sup-
position, the Apostle's way of reasoning will
appear

(a) Ver. 12.

appear more intelligible, and more strongly conclusive against his opponents. For, according to their principles, if there is no Resurrection, there is no future state at all. And *then they also, who are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished*; as the Apostle justly infers from that supposition, (b) in order to expose the absurdity of it. The same view of the case, will also suggest a very good reason, why he insists and enlarges so much upon the Resurrection of the *pious Dead* in particular. Because he was led, in the course of his argument, to interest a *moral* Providence in the question, with respect to the hard usage, and ill treatment, which many persons in those days met with, for honestly asserting and maintaining the Christian Cause. And this is the ground of his Remark, in the Verse before the Text. (c) *If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But (as a full assurance of the contrary) now is Christ risen from the Dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.*

In which words we have a double view of Christ's Resurrection, viz. as a *true* and certain *fact* in itself; and as a matter of great *importance* to us. These two Propositions are here advanced.

First. Now is Christ risen from the Dead.
And,

Secondly.

(b) Ver. 18.

(c) Ver. 19.

Secondly. He is become the first fruits of them that slept.

First. Now is Christ risen from the Dead. Christ's rising from the Dead, implies and supposes *his Death*, as previous thereunto. Accordingly, *St. Paul* introduces his Discourse with mentioning both these things together in their proper order. *(d) For, I delivered unto you first of all, that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. And (as a proof of his being really dead) that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.* It is not without a particular emphasis, that the Apostle repeats this expression, *according to the Scriptures*; applying it distinctly both to Christ's *Death*, *Burial*, and *Resurrection*. Because these events were all foretold in the ancient *Scripture Prophecies*; as well as related in the *Gospel History*. And thus, the Apostles and Evangelists having attested as facts, what the ancient Prophets foretold should come to pass; the *predictions* of the *Old Testament*, and the *events* under the *New*, clearly illustrate and confirm each other, with reference to these things.

The *Resurrection* of Christ *from the Dead*, is the matter which demands our present, and more immediate attention. *Now is Christ*
risen

risen from the Dead. The truth of which fact the Apostle establishes by *proper evidences*; and then further confirms it by an *artificial argument*.

I. The truth of this fact, namely, that *Christ is risen from the Dead*, we have here established by *proper evidences*.

(1.) The Apostle shews, that the Resurrection of Christ is attested by a sufficient number of witnesses. For thus he proceeds. (e) *And that he was seen of Cephas, (that is, after he rose from the Dead; as mentioned in the preceding Verse). then of the Twelve. After that he was seen of above five hundred Brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James; then of all the Apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the Apostles (like an abortive, not come to it's proper growth) that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.* It is observable, that Paul, then named Saul, was going upon a persecuting design to Damascus, at the very time, when the Lord Jesus appeared to him in the way (f). And so, when he remembered that appearance, he was naturally led, by an association of ideas, to reflect upon himself in this manner. However, that he might obviate any aspersions, which might be

(e) Ver. 5—9.

(f) Acts ix. 1—17.

be cast upon him, to the diminution of his character, from what he modestly says here of himself, he thought proper to add, (g) *But by the Grace of God, I am, what I am, (now, i. e. a very different man from what I was, before Christ was seen of me) and his Grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet, not I, but the Grace of God which was with me.* Thus, without losing his humility, he supported the true dignity of his character, with a peculiar grace. But this by the way.

You see then, that the Resurrection of Christ is attested by a sufficient *number* of witnesses. I proceed now to observe,

(2.) They are *credible* witnesses that have attested this fact, and fit to be believed. For,

As to their *private character*, they are persons, who *could* neither be deceived themselves in this affair, nor *would* they deceive others.

It is utterly impossible, in the nature of the thing, that these witnesses of Christ's Resurrection should be *deceived themselves*, in so plain a matter of fact. Because, for the most part, they were intimately acquainted with the *Person* of Christ, before his Death; and so, after he was risen from the Dead, they could easily know him again, by the free conversation they had with him for many days.

This

This they might the more easily do, if it be considered, that, for their greater satisfaction, Christ rose again *the third day*, without *seeing Corruption*; that he rose from the dead with the visible *marks* of his Crucifixion upon him, without any sensible change in his bodily substance, shape, or features; with the same *flesh and bones*, mien and aspect; the better to ascertain the sameness and identity of his Person, to his Disciples. It was to his most familiar friends and acquaintance, that Christ *shewed himself alive, after his Passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God (b)*; the common subject of his Discourse to them, for years past. And certainly such persons must be the most proper Witnesses of his Resurrection. Hence that motion of St. Peter; *(i) Wherefore of these men, who have companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, begining from the Baptism of John, unto the same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained, to be a Witness with us of his Resurrection.*

In short, these Witnesses were such, as neither *could*, nor, if that had been possible, *would* be imposed on in the business of our Lord's Resurrection. So far from being prejudiced in favour of the thing, or over-credulous in the matter; on the contrary, they

(b) Acts i. 3.

(i) Acts i. 21, 22.

rather indulged unreasonable doubts and scruples upon this head. For, they would not admit the belief of Christ's Resurrection, without examining into the evidence of the fact, with all the severity and exactness of the most scrupulous unbelief. Witness that declaration of *Thomas*, (*k*) *Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hands into his side, I will not believe.* Was not this an excess of caution, which argued a culpable degree of incredulity? But yet our blessed Saviour satisfied the demand, at once, to the *reproof*, and to the *conviction*, of him that made it, in so peremptory a manner. (*l*) *Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believe.* The like satisfaction Christ gave his other Disciples also, in order to convince them fully, that it was not an airy phantom, which they saw, when he appeared to them after his Resurrection, but his *very self*. *Behold*, said he, (*m*) *my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.* Thus to the Apostles whom he had chosen to be his Witnesses, he shewed HIMSELF alive after his passion, by the most infallible proofs. Therefore, the Witnesses of Christ's

(*k*) John xx. 25.(*l*) Ver. 27.(*m*) Luke xxiv. 39.

Christ's Resurrection, could not possibly be deceived themselves in this affair.

And it is morally impossible, that they should deceive others in the case. For, they could have no proper inducement to it, but quite the reverse. So far from serving any worldly interest, by *preaching, through Jesus, the Resurrection of the Dead* (n), they exposed themselves to *suffering shame for his Name* (o). And, if in preaching that Doctrine, they had maintained a falsehood, they must have incurred at once, the displeasure both of God and men; and thus, *of all men*, have been the *most* wretchedly stupid and *miserable*. But they *rejoyced that they were counted worthy to suffer* in such a Cause, for this reason, and upon this account, that they knew it was a good Cause, and so they *rejoyced in the Truth*. And certainly, no set of men in the world, from the begining of the Creation of God, ever gave stronger proofs of their honesty and integrity, than the Apostles of Christ did, in bearing witness to his Resurrection, under such trying circumstances of their sincerity. Therefore, in every view, they manifestly appear to be credible Witnesses, and fit to be believed, considered in their *private character*.

Again. They are credible Witnesses, because the Truth of their deposition was confirmed by a divine Testimony. For this great

R 2

end

(n) Acts iv. 2.

(o) Acts v. 41.

end and purpose, Christ promised his Apostles the Gift of the holy Ghost; saying, (p) *But ye shall receive power, after the holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be Witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* Pursuant to which promise, the holy Ghost being given to the Apostles, they justly appealed unto it, as a divine confirmation of their Testimony, concerning the Resurrection of Christ, in the following manner. (q) *This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are Witnesses. Therefore, being by the right-hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father, the promise of the holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear; meaning the miraculous Gift of Tongues.* Again. (r) *The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right-hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give Repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are Witnesses of these things; and so is also the holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.* But certainly, the God of Truth would never have set his seal to a lie, by conferring such divine Gifts upon the Apostles of Christ; if they had been false Witnesses of God, and testified of God that he had raised up Christ, when he had not raised him up (s).

Once

(p) Acts i. 8.

(q) Acts ii. 32, 33.

(r) Acts v. 30—32.

(s) Ver. 15.

Once more—The Apostles of Christ are credible Witnesses of his Resurrection, and fit to be believed, because their Testimony was actually believed from the beginning, by the most honest and impartial Enquirers after Truth; I mean, those persons, who gave the best proof of their sincerity, by embracing the Christian Religion upon this very principle, under the greatest difficulties, and discouragements. There is indeed no accounting for the *being* of Christianity in the world, upon any other supposition, than that of Christ's Resurrection. For, the Death and Crucifixion of Christ, was a public fact, equally notorious and infamous in the eye of the world. If therefore it had not been followed with his Resurrection from the Dead, the Christian Cause must inevitably have died, and been buried with him in oblivion. But it is a great satisfaction to us, who live at this distance of time and place, from the Gospel scene of action, that those very persons, who had the best *opportunities* for enquiring into the Truth of this great fact; and, at the same time, discovered the best *disposition* to enquire into the matter *impartially*, were fully convinced of it themselves, and, upon this conviction, were *persuaded to be Christians*. And thus, from those ancient Believers, Saints, and Martyrs, the Christian Religion hath been received, and handed down to us, in a long succession of ages.

What then is the proper Conclusion from the whole, but this, here in the Text? *Now is Christ risen from the Dead. The Lord is risen indeed (t). Therefore* (says the Apostle, (u) concluding his argument from the *Witnesses*) *whether it were I, or they, so we preached, and so ye believed. And so the Truth of this fact is sufficiently established by proper evidences.*

II. It is further confirmed by an *artificial argument*, grounded upon the *evil consequences*, and great absurdity of the contrary supposition. For thus the Apostle proceeds. (x) *Now, if Christ be preached, that he rose from the Dead, how say some among you, that there is no Resurrection of the Dead? But if there be no Resurrection of the Dead, then is not Christ risen.* (His Resurrection, and that of others, having a close connexion with each other in the Gospel scheme.) *And if Christ be not risen, then is our Preaching* (that he is risen) *vain, and your faith* (in believing that fact) *is also vain. Yea, and* (which is worse) *we are found false Witnesses of God; because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the Dead rise not. For if the Dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain* (to all intents and purposes) *ye are yet in your sins.* (“ For, “ though

(t) Luke xxiv. 34.

(u) Ver. 11.

(x) Ver. 12—19.

“ though Christ *died for our sins, according*
 “ *to the Scriptures,*” as I said before (y);
 “ yet, if he is not also *risen for our justifica-*
 “ *tion, justification of life (z),* in that case,
 “ the *penalty of sin, which is Death,* remains
 “ in full force against you still.”) *Then they*
also, who are fallen asleep in Christ, are pe-
ished. (And who can entertain such a no-
 tion without detestation?) *If in this life only*
we have hope in Christ (“ without any prof-
 “ *pect of a better life to come*”) *we are of*
all men most miserable. “ (Considering what
 “ we suffer for his sake at present, to pro-
 “ mote his Cause and Interest in the world.)
 “ And what a Reflection is this upon the
 “ Providence of God, in calling us *Christi-*
 “ *ans,* but more especially us *Apostles,* to such
 “ hard work and service.”

Thus, you see, the Apostle inter-weaves
 in his argument, the particular fact of Christ's
 Resurrection, with the Doctrine of a general
 Resurrection, as what must both stand, or
 fall together. But his chief design in this
 Discourse, seems to be, to establish the *latter*
 by the *former*, in opposition to *some among*
 the Christians at *Corinth*, who said, *there is*
no Resurrection of the Dead. It is hard to
 conceive, how these persons could be *Chri-*
stians at all, without believing and allowing
 that Christ himself rose from the Dead. Ne-
 vertheless they might deny a general Resur-

R 4

rection;

(y) Ver. 3.

(z) Rom. iv. 25. v. 18.

rection; like *Hymeneus*, and *Philetus*, who (as *St. Paul* tells *Timothy*) (a) concerning the Truth have erred, saying, that the Resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some, (as to that important article.) Now, if this was really the case, as seems most probable, it gave the Apostle a great advantage in his argument, of which he made a proper use, for the conviction of those, that oppugned the Doctrine of a general Resurrection. However, that the force of his argument might not wholly depend upon their own concessions, but rest upon a firm and solid foundation; he begins with setting forth the clear and bright evidence of Christ's Resurrection. And so, having thus made good his ground, and prepared the way, he proceeds to his main point, saying in the Text, *But now is Christ risen from the Dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.*

Therefore, having taken one view of Christ's Resurrection, viz. as a *certain fact* in itself; we are now led to consider it as a *matter of great Importance* to us. And so I pass on to the other Proposition contained in the words before us.

Secondly. He, i. e. Christ, is become the first fruits of them that slept, or are asleep; that is, Die, or are Dead.

I. Death

(a) 2 Tim. ii. 18.

I. Death is often represented and spoken of in *Scripture*, under the notion of a *Sleep*; a name which the Apostle hath given it several times in this Chapter, as well as here in the Text (*b*). But in what respect Death is a Sleep, particularly to the pious Dead, and those that *sleep in Jesus*, we should inquire with some caution; that so we may not push the comparison too far, by making Death to resemble a Sleep in all points.

I take it for granted, that the human soul *survives* the body at Death, and does not expire with it. For, on the contrary supposition, those, who *kill the body*, would also *kill the soul*. A notion, which the great Oracle of Truth hath openly declared against (*c*). Now, as the human soul survives the body at Death; so doubtless it retains it's *thought* and *consciousness*. For, if the rational soul of man is, as it is commonly supposed to be, a spiritual, thinking substance, it can no more be deprived of thought and consciousness, than it can lose it's very essence. And so, as long as it exists, it must *think*.

These things premised, let me now observe, that the Death of the Saints may be compared to a Sleep, as it is a state of *rest*, of *comfortable* and *refreshing* rest, which will be followed with a blessed *rising*.—For, *Blessed*

(*b*) Ver. 6, 18, 51.

(*c*) Mat. x. 28. BURNET. de Stat. Mort. Cap. 2.

sed are the Dead, who die in the Lord ; because they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them (d).—The proper notion of *taking rest in sleep*, is that of a *comfortable and refreshing rest*. And this we may apprehend to be the case of holy souls departed, and gone into the world of spirits, when their bodies are resting in the grave. For, they are in *Paradise (e)* ; a state of joy and *felicity* ; where they may well be conceived to enjoy the sensible satisfaction of their former *good habits, dispositions, and affections* ; the pleasure of *reflection*, and of *expectation* ; when they look back upon a course of life, well finished, or forward, to the great rising Day, at which happy time, immortal souls shall be clothed with immortal bodies, and obtain their *perfect consummation in bliss*. This carries us to the point in view, viz. that *Christ is become the first fruits of them that slept*.

II. In which language of the Apostle, there is a plain allusion to the *first fruits* under the Law. Now, “ the first fruits was a
 “ small part, which was taken, and offered
 “ to God, and *sanctified* the whole mass
 “ which was first to follow (*f*).” In like manner, the Resurrection of Christ is a firm security, a sure pledge, and a certain forerunner of a general Resurrection, to all *sanctified*
 and

(d) Rev. xiv. 13.

(e) Luke xxiii. 43.

(f) LOCKE in loc.

and holy persons ; to whose case the Apostle confines his Discourse, for a reason suggested before ; and also because his design was to encourage the profession and practice of the Christian Religion, by the glorious hope of a blessed Immortality. Let us now consider his *proof* of the point, and attend to the course of his argument, which is formed upon the principles of the Gospel, and divine Revelation.

(1.) That *he is become the first fruits of them that sleep*, the Apostle argues from the relation Christ stands in to mankind, and the public character he sustains, as the Saviour of the world (g). For, says he, (h) *since by man came Death, by man came also the Resurrection of the Dead. For, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order ; Christ the first fruits, afterward they, that are Christ's, at his coming.* It was by the sin of Adam, that Death came into the world ; and it is through the obedience of Christ, the last Adam, that the Penalty of Death is removed, by the grant of a Resurrection from the Dead (i).

(2.) The truth of this point is further argued from the *power* with which Christ is invested, in the execution of his high office, as our great Redeemer, until the whole end
of

(g) John iv. 42.

(h) 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22, 23.

(i) Rom. v. 12, 13, &c.

of his administration is accomplished. (k) *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the (or his) Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet; (as was foretold) (l) The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is Death. (Or, the last enemy, Death, shall be destroyed.) (m) For he hath put all things under his feet. ("According to another prophetic declaration, which will have it's accomplishment in due time (n)."* But when he (i. e. the Psalmist) says, *all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, who did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him, that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.* The same argument, founded on the power of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we look for from Heaven, to subdue all enemies, and overcome all opposition to his design of raising us thither, St. Paul more briefly touches upon in the following words, (o) saying of Christ, *Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

(3.) The

(k) Ver. 24—28.

(m) HALLET. in loc.

(o) Phil. iii. 21,

(l) Psal. cx. 1.

(n) Psa. viii. 6.

(3.) The Apostle seems to argue his point from the nature of the *Christian Institution*, as ordered by divine Wisdom, with respect both to *Professors* and *Preachers* of the Gospel, particularly as the matter was circumstanced at that time. And such a way of arguing must have it's weight and force with all Christians. A character, which belonged to those persons, with whom the Apostle is arguing (whatever private opinions they might entertain) for he tells the *Corinthians* (*p*), that *some among themselves* had broached the error, which he undertook to confute.

Accordingly, in this view, I consider his way of reasoning, in some following Verses, (*q*) though it is commonly taken in a different light. For, what St. *Paul* hints about his own, and others sufferings in the Christian Cause, hath been thought to be urged by him, only as an argument of their great *Sincerity*, in attesting the truth of Christ's Resurrection. But it does not appear to me, that any persons in the Church of *Corinth*, called in question their Sincerity upon this head, or even denied the *Fact* itself. Besides, what he thought fit to *premise*, by way of introduction to his main subject, concerning the truth and certainty of Christ's Resurrection, he had finished before; and so he had no occasion to insist upon that matter again otherways, than as it stood connected with

with the proof of a general Resurrection ; which is the point he hath now assumed, and is here pursuing.

Therefore, I presume, his *third* argument is grounded, not upon *human prudence and policy*, directing persons to decline unnecessary sufferings, but upon *divine Wisdom and Equity*, with regard to the Christian Institution, appointing and requiring persons, both at their *entrance* into the Christian Church, and likewise in their behaviour afterwards, to testify their faith in Christ, and their hopes of Salvation by him, in the most open and public manner. And so his argument thus proceeds (*r*).

Else (that is, “ if Christ is not risen from
“ the Dead, and become the first fruits of
“ them that sleep”) *why shall, or must they
do it, that are baptized for the Dead?* So I read and understand the words (*s*) ; and their meaning I take to be this. “ *Why* are those,
“ who assume the profession of Christianity,
“ *obliged to be baptized for the Dead*, by a
“ positive divine Command, enjoining the
“ thing?” *If the Dead rise not at all, why
are they then* (“ pursuant to such a divine in-
“ junction, in fact”) *baptized for the Dead* ;
that is, “ into Christ as *Dead*, and as being
“ themselves *Dead with him?*” Which is
the case of all baptized Christians. For, as
the same Apostle says upon another occasion,

Know

(*r*) Ver. 29, &c.

(*s*) See the Appendix.

(t) *Know ye not, that so many of us, as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his Death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into Death.* Laying these passages together, it appears to me, that St. Paul refers to *Christian Baptism*, when he speaks of persons being *baptized for the Dead*, (whatever may be the precise meaning and import of this particular phrase) So that he seems to be arguing here from the *wisdom* and *propriety* of this divine Institution. And his argument, I think, stands thus. “ If Christ is
 “ not risen from the Dead, and become the
 “ first fruits of them that sleep, certainly,
 “ divine wisdom would never have appointed
 “ the Ordinance of Baptism, to be the sacred and solemn rite of initiation in the
 “ Christian Church. For, upon that supposition, *why* should the Disciples of Christ
 “ be required to submit to an Institution,
 “ which at once supposes his *Death*, and represents their own? But, on the contrary,
 “ it is in hopes of a *Resurrection from the Dead*, through Christ, that persons take
 “ upon them the profession of his Religion,
 “ in this way and manner.” *Being buried with him by Baptism, wherein also we are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who raised him from the Dead* (u).
 “ And viewed in this light, there appears to
 “ be

(t) Rom. vi. 3, 4.

(u) Col. ii. 12.

“ be no absurdity, but a great propriety in
 “ Christian Baptism.”

To go on now with the Apostle’s argument. *And why stand we* (Professors, but especially Preachers of the Gospel) *in jeopardy every hour?* (“ exposed to continual hazards and
 “ dangers, in maintaining the post which
 “ God hath assigned us, for defence of the
 “ Christian Cause. How can this be reconciled with the *Wisdom* and *Equity* of his
 “ moral Providence, upon the supposition
 “ aforesaid, viz. that the *Dead rise not at*
 “ *all?* With regard to myself in particular.”) *I protest by your* (or our) *rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.* (“ Where I now am, being exposed to Death
 “ every Day of my life.”) *If after the manner of men* (or, as a mere man, κατ’ ἀνθρώπων, without the hopes of a Christian) *I have fought with beasts at Ephesus* (where are many adversaries) *(x) what advantageth it me (y)?* (“ What recompence can I expect in that
 “ case, worthy of a wise and just administration, for being called forth to such hard
 “ services?”) *If the Dead rise not; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;* (“ and so
 “ there will be an end of us for ever,” but) *Be not deceived;* (with such vain imaginations) *evil communications corrupt good manners.*
 (And

(x) Chap. xvi. 9. 2 Tim. ii. 12.

(y) So I think this Verse should be divided and pointed.

{“ And therefore that kind of Discourse, though used by some, (z) I mention with abhorrence.”) *Awake to righteousness, and sin not*; (“ by entertaining and indulging wrong notions concerning the divine administration of human affairs”) *for some (among you) have not the (true) knowledge of God*: (“ and his Providence, which governs the world in the best and wisest manner”) *I speak this to your shame*, (particularly those among you, who say there is no Resurrection of the Dead.)

In this manner St. Paul concludes his great argument. And the nature of the conclusion, seems to give us the true key to his preceding Discourse, where, as hath been observed, he interests a *moral providence* in the question, after the manner before explained. But having finished his argument, the Apostle proceeds in the next place, to state and to answer some *objections*. (a) *But some man will say, How are the Dead raised up? And with what body do they come?* Which words might be differently pointed and read thus: *How! are the Dead raised up? But with what Body do they come?* However, according to either reading, the words may be understood to contain two Objections, to both which the Apostle returns a particular and distinct Answer. The first Objection against the Resurrection of the Dead, seems to respect the

S unfurmout-

(z) Isa. xxii. 13.

(a) Ver. 35, 36, &c.

unsurmountable difficulty of the thing ; and the second relates to the *inconceivable manner* of forming the Resurrection-body. Let us then consider each Objection in it's order, with the Apostle's Answer to both distinctly.

I. *Objection. How are the Dead raised up?* Or thus, *How!* or, *what!* *are the Dead raised up?* that is, *are to be raised up.* Is that possible? This, I say, is the first Objection against the Resurrection of the Dead, as founded upon the Resurrection of Christ, according to the Apostle's argument. Nor I think, is it hard to guess, how a person might be led, by his Discourse, to make both this, and the following Objection. For, as to the Resurrection of Christ, from which the Apostle had been arguing ; this body did not lie in the grave, so long as to be dissolved ; or *see corruption*, according to the Scripture phrase (*b*). Therefore, that Christ should rise from the Dead, is a matter of much easier conception, than that the other Dead should arise out of *the dust of the earth*, after their bodies have been putrified in the grave, and the particles, of which they were formed, separated and dispersed. And so, from hence, *some man* among the *Corinthians*, might take occasion to say, *How are the Dead raised up?* “ Is it possible, for the “ mind of man to conceive of such things ? ” Now, to this the Apostle replies.

Answer.

(*b*) Acts ii. 31. xiii. 36, 37.

Answer. Thou fool, that, which thou sowest, is not quickned, except it die; except it die, and rot in the ground. “Why then, q. d. art thou so stupid, as to object against the possibility of the Dead being raised, after the putrefaction of their bodies in the dust of the earth? Lift up thine eyes, man, and look upon the fields, and behold a new Resurrection every year, in lower nature, according to that devotion-inspiring scene of Providence, described by the holy Psalmist.” (c) *Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth.* It is observable, that Christ made use of the same similitude, in speaking of his own Death and Resurrection, upon a certain occasion, saying, (d) *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

Thus, the Apostle returns a short, but smart Answer to the first *Objection*, which he treats with contempt, as proceeding from great weakness, and betraying very gross ignorance of God’s almighty power, in the objector (just as the *Saadducees* erred in the same matter, *not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God*) (e). And so, having dispatched it in few words, he proceeds to the other *Objection*, upon which he insists more

S 2

largely,

(c) Psal. civ. 30.

(d) John xii. 24.

(e) Matt. xxii. 29.

largely, in an admirable strain of Discourse, which highly deserves our attention, and will repay it with pleasure.

II. *Objection.* And (or *but*) *with what body do they come?* that is, *are to come* from the grave at the Resurrection. “As to the *Resurrection of Christ*, from which you argue, it is easy to understand *with what body* he came from the mansions of the Dead, where he continued but a little while. But, with what body shall those persons come from the grave, who have been dead, and buried a long time, and whose bodies, being turned to dust and rottenness, may have undergone innumerable changes and transmutations.” This appears to be the true state of the question.

Answer. And in replying to the Objection, the Apostle strikes out into a large field of Discourse, about the Resurrection-body of the *Saints*; being led (as was hinted before) by the drift and form of his *argument*, to confine his thoughts to that subject. The particulars of his *Answer* are laid down, and may be taken up in the following order.

(1.) He illustrates the matter by some proper instances, or apt similitudes, taken from sensible objects (*f*). But, that the propriety and force of his comparisons may be the better discerned and felt, we must attentively consider and mark, how the Objection lies.

lies. The question then is *this*, *With what body do they come?* A question, which implies, that they must come with *some body* or other, if the Dead are raised up. Nor does the Apostle blame the *Objector*, and much less call him a *fool*, for supposing such a thing; but on the contrary, he allows the supposition, and argues upon it in his reply to the Objection. This therefore is an agreed point, that, if the Dead are raised up, they must come with some body (g). But then the Question here is, “*With what body do they come?* Either it must be with the “*very same body*, that was laid in the grave, “*or with another body*. If the former, insuperable difficulties attend the notion. If the latter, how can this be properly called “*a Resurrection?* It is rather, to speak with “*propriety, a new Creation.*” This is the *Dilemma*; and thus stands the Objection in form. And what the Apostle says to it, *implies* this Answer, that the Resurrection-body, may be both the same body, and not the same, in different respects. For, as he proceeds to shew, out of one and the same bodily substance, not only *another*, but a *different kind* of body may be formed and produced.

Out of one and the same bodily substance, may be extracted *another* body, as we see in the case of vegetation. This is the Apostle’s

S 3

first

(g) Vid. J. CLERIC. in Matt. xxii. 31.

first instance. For, having said, That which thou sowest, is not quickned, except it die ; he adds, (b) And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body, that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat (according to our Saviour's comparison mentioned before) or of some other grain. But God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. " And to every seed it's own " body." Mark that ! Thus every seed, by the wisdom and power of God, is made to produce it's own proper body, which is extracted from it's seminal substance, in the natural course of vegetation. In like manner, by the same divine chemistry, can be reduced from the substance of the human body, another proper body, which may therefore be called it's own body (i).

Again. Out of the same bodily substance, may be produced, not only another, but a different kind of body. This observation is grounded upon a known principle of natural philosophy, concerning the different modifications of the same matter, which form all the different sorts of bodies, both animate and inanimate. An hypothesis confirmed by the Mosaic account of the Creation, which represents Almighty God as making all things
at

(b) Ver. 37, 38.

(i) See BENNET's Christian Oratory, Chap. II. Sect. VIII. Second Meditation on the Resurrection,

at first out of one common mass (*k*). And upon this principle, the Apostle's argument here manifestly proceeds. For, in order to prove, that the *Resurrection-body* may be both the *same* body, and *not the same* in different respects, he goes on to mention different forms and species of bodies, which are produced from the same common mass, and the same original matter, differently *modified*; begining with *animate* bodies, and ending with bodies *inanimate*. (*l*) *All flesh* (says he) *is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.* ("Which last instance, directs our eyes and thoughts upwards. And so we proceed.") There are *also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.* There is ("to keep our minds still aloft") *one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory.* All these different kinds of bodies, in the Heavens, the Air, the Sea, and the earth, were originally produced, by the creating voice of God out of the same common mass of matter, under so many different forms and modifications. How unreasonable then must it be to ask, by way of Objection, against the notion of the *Dead being raised up, with what body do they come?*

S 4

As

(*k*) Gen. i.(*l*) Ver 39—41.

As if the same almighty power, could not, from the human body, produce another very different body at the Resurrection, by a new modification of it's constituent parts!

Having thus illustrated the matter in hand, by some proper instances, or apt similitudes, taken from sensible objects, in the next place,

(2.) The Apostle *applies* this illustration to his present purpose, in the following manner. (m) *So also is the Resurrection of the Dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption : it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power : it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.* In these exalted terms, St. Paul describes the refined properties, and sublime perfections of the *Resurrection-body* of the Saints. And so he returns a full and direct answer to the question, *with what body do they come?* This may be a proper place to mention the Remark of a learned and pious Writer. (n) “ Whether the “ phrase concerning the body Ver. 42. (*it is sown*) refers to it's production into the “ world, or it's being laid in the grave ; the “ reference to the after-body, is manifest ; “ it (i. e. *our present body*) is the seed and “ matter out of which the Resurrection-bo- “ dy, as it were, springs, and from which “ it is produced.” Which observation, as
it

(m) Ver. 42—44.

(n) BENNET'S Christian Oratory.

it seems agreeable to the scope and design of the Apostle's argument; so it renders unnecessary all the pains that have been taken to determine the sense of that phrase in one particular way (o).

(3.) St. Paul confirms his foregoing account of the Resurrection-body, by some proper arguments and considerations (p).

And here he begins with the notion of a *natural* and *spiritual body*, spoken of in the preceding Verse. This distinction he supports by the two illustrious examples of *Adam* and *Christ*, whom he had brought into a comparison before (q); and here he brings them into view again, to re-impress the minds of his Readers with the grand Scheme, and glorious Mystery of Redemption. (r) *There is, says he, a natural body (or an animal body) and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickning spirit. Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward, that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from Heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And thus the distinction between a natural and a spiritual body,*

(o) See LOCKE in loc.

(q) Ver. 22.

(p) Ver. 44—50.

(r) Ver. 44—48.

body, hath a plain foundation in the order of the divine œconomy.

In the next place, the Apostle suggests the great *fitness* and *congruity* of this wonderful change, in the bodies of the Saints at the Resurrection. (s) *And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.* That we should do so, is highly fit and congruous, in the order of the divine Dispensation, and according to the nature of that constitution, under which we are placed, through the mercy of God in Christ, our great Redeemer. Since we have borne in our bodies, *the image of the earthy*, by means of our natural relation to the *first Adam*, so by parity of reason, and just analogy, we shall also bear *the reverse image of the heavenly*, in virtue of our spiritual union with the *second Adam*. And accordingly, Christ will *change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body* (t).

Last of all, the Apostle insists upon the *absolute necessity* of this spiritual change in the bodies of the rising Saints, in order to fit and qualify them for heavenly glory. For so he adds, (u) *Now this I say, Brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.* The corporeal nature must be greatly changed from what it is at present, and the *ani-*
mai

(s) Ver. 49.

(t) Phil. iii. 21.

(u) Ver. 50.

mal body must become a *spiritual body*, that so it may be capable of enjoying a state of spiritual happiness in Heaven. The necessity of such a transforming change, may be the more readily admitted, with respect to the bodies of *Saints departed*. Because the like change must also take place in the living Saints, at the time of the Resurrection. For as the Apostle adds, (x) *Behold, I shew you a mystery! We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: (for the trumpet shall sound) and the Dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass that saying which is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory (y)?* Thus, what is written in the ancient *Scriptures of Truth*, concerning this important event, shall receive it's full completion. Which further confirms the Doctrine of the *Resurrection of the Dead*, as it appears to be a thing *foretold* by the *holy Prophets*, as well as *preached* by the *holy Apostles*.

We have now gone through the *argumentative* part of St. Paul's Discourse, in this
most

(x) Ver. 51—54.

(y) Isa. xxv. 8. Hof. xiii. 14.

most excellent Chapter. A Chapter, which you know is read in religious Assemblies upon the most solemn occasions. And if what I have offered to consideration, prove of any use and service, to lead your serious thoughts into the true method and meaning of it, and so contribute thereby to the reading, and the hearing of it read, more to your edification and comfort, I shall then have no reason to repent the pains I have taken, to understand the Chapter myself, and explain it to you.

What remains then, is to apply the Subject, in some proper Reflections. Is it true, that *Christ is risen from the Dead, and become the first fruits of them that sleep?*

(1.) How *thankful* should we all be to God, for this wonderful Dispensation, and display of his Mercy, to a fallen dying world! (2) *The sting of Death is sin* (the guilty procuring Cause of Death) *and the strength of sin is the Law.* (Which gave it a killing power, by making Death the penalty of sin at first) (a). *But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Great fault hath been found, by the enemies of divine Revelation, with the Scripture account of man's fall, representing Death universally, as the fruit and effect of his *first disobedience*. But, if the *first Adam* forfeited himself the gift of immortality, which is retrieved by the *second Adam*; he could not transmit the same
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(2) Ver. 56, 57. (a) Gen. ii. 17. Rom. v. 12.

to his posterity ; and so, in consequence of his transgression, they became subject to Death, according to the common course of nature. And what is there in this Constitution, justly liable to any exception ? Is it that mankind are all *mortal* ? In fact, we see, they *are* so, however they *came* to be so ; whether by the original Law of their nature, or in consequence of man's Apostacy. And is the condition of mankind in general, any worse upon the latter supposition, than the former ? If not, where is the ground of complaint in this case ? Is it not highly probable, that the very same sort of persons, who now exclaim against the Scripture account of this matter, would have made the like complaints, if the *Scripture* had given us a contrary account, and represented Death, not as the fruit of sin, but as the necessary result of the human frame originally, as it came out of the hands of God ? In that case, would they not have cried out most lamentably, "*Tragical indeed !* that such a noble creature as Man, should be made for so short a duration, such a momentary existence, in his original state and condition ? If he had done any thing to forfeit his life, something might be said in favour of such a Dispensation. But, that he should be doomed to Death, without deserving it, is very unaccountable."

However,

However, the notion of God's offering to man, the privilege of immortality, at the beginning of his existence, upon certain terms, and then, afterwards, upon a forfeiture of it, restoring him again, to *that blessed hope, by a Redemption from Death and the Grave*; I say, this Hypothesis is not only *consistent* with God's *universal Goodness*, but a glorious instance and manifestation of it to the children of men. Therefore, as *the sting of Death is Sin, and the strength of Sin is the Law, thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, over Death and the Grave, through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath abolished Death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel (b). For the wages of Sin is Death, but the Gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, thanks be to God, for this unspeakable Gift.*

(2.) What

(b) 2 Tim. i. 10. Note—If *bringing life and immortality to light*, be the grand design of the Christian Revelation, the *Gospel* is in effect, though more obscurely preached to all mankind, in the general course of God's Providence, ordering his Dispensations in this present world, after such a manner, as naturally tends to direct their thoughts and views, to a future state of existence, and *equal retribution*. Therefore, the benefit of the Christian System, is not confined to so narrow a part of the world, as may be imagined. Such men, as the famous SOCRATES, who lived and died in the belief and expectation of a better life, are even pronounced *Christians*, by some of the most ancient Fathers of the Christian Church. Vid. J. MARTYR. Apol. II.

(2.) What rich *encouragement* have we all to be true, and faithful, and constant, in the service of Christ at all times, even the worst of times ! This is another, very natural, and just reflection, suggested by St. Paul himself, in the close of all. (c) *Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* Be stedfast in the principles, unmoveable in the *profession*, and always abounding in the *practice* of true Religion, which is infinitely amiable and excellent in it's own nature ; but, by way of balance and counterpoise to all worldly terrors and allurements, it is further recommended by the most honourable and happy rewards. For, *you know*, and are now well assured upon the best and most satisfactory grounds, that eternal life, and a glorious immortality, will be the blessed recompence of a *patient continuance in well-doing*.

(3.) Upon the whole, have not Christian Believers sufficient cause to moderate their *fears* and *sorrows*, with respect to their own Death, and the Death of their pious friends ? But Death is unstung ! This *King of Terrors* is disarmed, by the joyful and triumphant hopes of *life and immortality*, now brought to the clearest light, by the bright rays of the *Sun of righteousness*, shining in the Gospel

pel with meridian lustre. O *Death*, where is thy *sling*? It is gone. O *Grave*, where is thy *victory*? It is lost. And *Death*, which conquered all others, is swallowed up in *victory* itself. Hallelujah! Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and never-fading, in Heaven (d). For, now is Christ risen from the Dead, and become the first fruits of them that sleep. Wherefore encourage yourselves, and comfort one another with these things.

(d) 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.





An APPENDIX to the foregoing DISCOURSE.

THE notion of being *baptized for the Dead*, mentioned by St. Paul Ver. 23. hath puzzled many, and given occasion to various conjectures and opinions (a). The obscurity of the Apostle's words, to common Readers, seems to have arisen principally from *two Causes*, viz. a *wrong Division*, and an *improper Translation*.

I. The *Verse* referred unto, is evidently divided and pointed wrong, as we read the words thus. *Else, what shall they do, who are baptized for the Dead, if the Dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the Dead?* St. Paul is here arguing upon a *supposition* couched under the word *Else*, at the beginning of the *Verse*, which connects with Ver. 20 (b). And as it referred to premises lying at such a distance, therefore, for the greater perspicuity in his Discourse, he *repeats* the same supposition, expressing it fully

(a) See Dr. EDWARDS Inquiry into 1 Cor. xv. 29. and SPANHEMIUS's Disputation on Baptism for the Dead, &c.

(b) See LOCKE.

in those words, *If the Dead rise not at all.* Which should be joined to the last, and not to the first Clause of the Verse. And so the true reading and division of the words, is plainly *this*; *Else*, (i. e. if *Christ* is not risen from the Dead, &c. Ver. 20.) *what shall they do, who are baptized for the Dead?* *If the Dead rise not at all, why are they then baptized for the Dead?* This way of pointing the Verse, makes the two sentences, contained in it, full, clear, and distinct. But, according to the common division, there is a needless *Pleonasm* in the first Clause, at the expence of an *Ellipsis* in the last Clause.

II. The first words of the Verse seem not to be rightly translated, *Else, what shall they do, &c.* And so I have taken the liberty of reading the words differently, thus, *Else, why shall, or must, they do it, who are baptized for the Dead?* For,

(1.) As to the *Greek* particle $\tau\acute{\iota}$, which I render *why*, it is uniformly so rendered, both in the close of this Verse, and likewise in the begining of the next. The words are, “*Why* are they then baptized for the Dead? And “*why* stand we in jeopardy every hour?” Besides, this particle is thus rendered in connexion with the same *Verb*. Mark xi. 3. *And if any man say unto you, $\tau\acute{\iota}$ ποιεῖτε τούτο, i. e. Why do ye this?* And again, Acts xiv. 15. *Sirs, $\tau\acute{\iota}$ ταῦτα ποιεῖτε, i. e. Why do ye these things?* Once more; the

the particle τί admits the same construction, not only in connexion with the same *Verb*, but also when both are followed with a *participle*, expressing the *matter* of the action, spoken of, according to the form of the Sentence there, as explained in the preceding Discourse. Mark xi. 5. τί ποιεῖτε λύοντες τὸν πῶλον; i. e. (not, *What do ye*, as we translate the words, but) *Why do ye it, loosing the Colt*. For it is the same question with that, Luke xix. 33. τί λύετε τὸν πῶλον. i. e. *Why loose ye the Colt*. So again, Acts xxi. 13. τί ποιεῖτε κλαίοντες, κ. τ. λ. which we render, *what mean ye to weep*, &c. But the words literally signify, *Why do ye it weeping*, &c. that is, *Why do you this thing? Why do ye weep?* In a similar construction of the words under consideration, I understand their grammatical sense thus, *Why shall they do it, who are baptized for the Dead?* That is, “*Why shall they be baptized for the Dead?*”

(2.) The *Verb*, ποιήσουσιν, we render *shall do*, I think, properly enough in this place, as importing the same with *must do*. For, as this construction suits the Connexion and Scope of the Apostle’s Discourse, so the *Verb* admits of it in the *future tense*, as it is here used. The following examples may suffice for the present. Exod. xviii. 20. *And thou shall teach them Ordinances and Laws, and shall shew them the way wherein they must walk,*

and the work which they must do. The work which they must do; τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιήσουσι. Again, Num. xxiii. 26. *All that the Lord speaketh, that must I do*; τοῦτο ποιήσω (c). Thus, when there is a Reference to a superior command, or a divine injunction, making a thing *necessary*, and requiring it to be done, (which I take to be the case here before us, with reference to Christian Baptism, which is an Ordinance of Christ) the *Verb* in question fairly admits the construction I have put upon it, in reading, *Why must they do it?*

(3.) The liberty I have taken, in supplying the word *it*, is justified by a common *Ellipsis*. Two examples of this kind, I suppose, we have seen already. Mark xi. 5. and Acts xxi. 13. where the same phrase, I mean the same Greek *particle*, in connexion with the same *Verb*, is used; as hath been noted before. If this may be called correcting the Text, I hope it is for the better. And I shall here mention another Text, which might be easily mended the same way; however our Translators came to overlook the *Ellipsis*, which they have allowed for in all the parallel places of the other Gospels, viz. Matth. xxiii. 11. Mark xv. 2. Luke xxiii. 3. The Text to which I refer is, John xviii. 37. *Thou sayest that I am a King*. A very improper construction of the words; which doubtless ought

ought to be read thus—*Thou sayest it ; for a King am I.* Thus, by the way, *Christ Jesus, before Pontius Pilate, witnessed a good confession (d).* And in this very instant, he *bore Witness to the Truth.* After all, though what hath been said, may be sufficient to support my interpretation of the Apostle's words, applying them to Christian Baptism, yet, in strict grammatical construction, there is some ambiguity in the phrase, *baptized for the Dead*, [ὕπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν, in the plural number,] as so applied.

However, without having recourse altogether, with Dr. WHITBY and others, to an *Enallage Numeri*, putting the *plural* for the *singular*, which would remove the difficulty at once ; I have endeavoured to make St. Paul his own interpreter, by what he says upon other occasions, of Christians being *baptized into the Death of Christ*, and *buried with him by Baptism into Death.* He speaks also of their *being planted together in the likeness of his Death, and being dead with Christ (e).* According to which account, Christian Baptism hath reference to a *number of Dead, in a Gospel construction of the thing.* And so, by Christians being *baptized for the Dead*, we may understand their being baptized into Christ *as dead* ; and *as being themselves dead*

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with

(d) 1 Tim. vi. 13.

(e) Rom. vi. 3—8. Col. ii. 12, 20.

with him ; which is the explication given of the words in the foregoing Discourse.

These Remarks bespeak the candor, and appeal to the impartial judgement of every Reader, who hath any talent, or taste for *sacred Criticism*. But, with regard to the prejudiced and captious Critic, let it suffice to say,

*Qui ducis vultus, & non legis ista libenter,
Omnibus invideas, Livide, nemo tibi.*

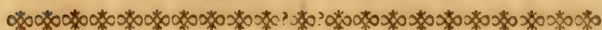
MARTIAL.





DISCOURSE XII.

Christ the Resurrection and the Life.



JOHN xi. 25, 26.

Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die. Believeſt thou this ?

BELIEVEST thou this ? But, who can believe it, may ſome be ready to ſay, when there ſeems to be ſomething, in our Saviour's laſt aſſertion, which contradicts almoſt daily experience ? For, is not Death the common lot of all men ? It certainly is. Do not perſons of all Characters, Believers and Unbelievers, alike die ? It is awfully plain they do. How then can we reconcile theſe things with the words of Jeſus, ſaying, *Whoſoever liveth, and believeth in me, ſhall never die ?*

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Various

Various methods have been taken by sundry Writers, to remove this obvious difficulty ; and different constructions of our Saviour's words offered ; which I pass over (a), and directly proceed to deliver my own sentiments of the matter.

Let it then be observed, that in order to comfort *Martba*, Sister of *Lazarus*, lately dead and buried, *Jesus said unto her, thy Brother shall rise again.* To which she replied, *I know that he shall rise again, in the Resurrection at the last Day.* This answer gave him a proper handle to speak of the general Resurrection, as a thing to be accomplished by Christ himself ; and consequently he was able, at that very instant, to raise her dear Brother from the Dead. It seems therefore very natural to consider Jesus, as speaking in the Text directly with an eye to the state of persons and things, at the time of the general Resurrection. And viewed in this light, his Discourse will be very clear and plain, and all the difficulty vanish at once. For, he may be easily conceived to speak to this effect.

“ I am the very Person appointed by God,
 “ to raise the Dead to life again, at the last
 “ Day ; be therefore that believeth in me, tho’
 “ he were dead, yet shall he (then) live ; and
 “ whosoever

(a) See BLACKWALL. *Sacr. Class.* Part II. Chap. 3. Dr. CLARK and DODDRIDGE in loc. HALLET. *Notes and Discourses.* Vol. III. Page 34, 35. Burial Office, &c.

“ *whosoever liveth* (at the same time when I
 “ *come to raise the Dead) and believeth in*
 “ *me, shall never die*; but he shall be instant-
 “ *ly changed*, and so translated to Heaven,
 “ *without dying at all.*”

This appears to be the construction, which the Disciples of Christ themselves, who were present on that occasion, put upon his words. For, when they supposed, by what Christ said to *Peter*, that the beloved Disciple should *tarry till he came*, they all from thence concluded, *that Disciple should not die (b)*. In further confirmation of the same sentiment, let me refer you to those words of *St. Paul*. *(c) Behold, I shew you a mystery*; (i. e. one of the peculiar Doctrines, or Discoveries of the Gospel, proper to be imparted to all that are *initiated* in the sacred Rites of the Christian Church) *we shall not all sleep (or die) but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last Trump; for the Trumpet shall sound, and the Dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (who are alive) shall be changed.*

The same distinction between the living and the sleeping Saints, at the great rising-day, occurs also in the following words of the same Apostle, which will throw some further light upon our Subject. *(d) For, we,*
who

(b) John xxi. 20—23.

(c) 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

(d) 1 Thess. iv. 15—17.

who are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent (or get the start of) them that are asleep. For, the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Arch-Angel, and with the Trump of God, and the Dead in Christ shall rise first (that is, before the living Saints are taken up into Heaven; and so it follows) Then we, who are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord.

And now, my Brethren, you see this great Subject begins to open, and unfold itself, in all it's high importance. The clearing up of one difficulty in the Text, hath placed it in such a striking light, and laid before our eyes such an amazing scene, with reference to the final consummation of all things, as may justly command universal attention. Oh, that it might please God, so to assist our Meditations upon this important Subject, and to impress it upon our minds, with such energy, and force, as that what we hear of to-day, we may happily experience in the *last* day; and either have the privilege to live without dying at all; or, however, to die, and rise again to live for ever! In order to which desirable end, I would offer the following Particulars to your serious and attentive consideration.

I. The

I. The great *Privilege* here spoken of in the Text.

II. The immediate *Author* and *Dispenser* of this *Privilege*. And,

III. The happy *Persons* who are intitled to it.

First. I am to consider the great *Privilege* spoken of in the Text ; viz. *the Resurrection and the Life*. A double *Privilege*, which is further described in the Text, by *some* persons living again after they were dead ; and by *others* living without ever dying at all. Great and wonderful things ! Let us view the matter distinctly, in both these affecting lights, and so consider the *Resurrection*, as it respects those persons that will live again after they were dead ; and then take into consideration the *Life* also, with reference to those that shall have the *Privilege* to live without dying at all.

(I.) Let us consider the *Resurrection*, as it respects those persons, that shall live again after they were dead. *I am*, saith the Lord, *the Resurrection* — *He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*

The mention of a *Resurrection*, I hope, will relish better in a Christian Assembly, than it did with some Philosophers at *Athens*, when St. *Paul* preached to them the *Resurrection of the Dead*. For *some* mocked at it ;
and

and others said, *we will hear thee again of this matter* (e). Some derided the notion as ridiculous and absurd; and others were amused with it, as a great *novelty*; such as all the *Athenians* hunted after (f). So far were those Masters of Reason, those great Professors of Wisdom, from discovering the Doctrine of a Resurrection, by the mere light of Nature.

When, indeed, we consider, that the Doctrine of a Resurrection is a matter of pure Revelation; that, as Death came into the world by Sin (g), so a Resurrection of the Dead, is the fruit and effect of mere Grace; and consequently, nothing but a positive express Revelation from God, could give us any proper assurance of the thing. Upon these considerations, it is not at all surprizing, that the light of Nature and Reason, left mankind so much in the dark upon this head. Even the Immortality of the Soul was scarcely discernable, with any degree of certainty, by that dim and glimmering light; at least, it was not clearly discerned in fact. For, as some Philosophers denied the thing, so, if others had their hopes, they had also their doubts and fears about it. Witness that celebrated Sage, and Saint, not to say Martyr,
of

(e) Acts xvii. 32.

(f) Ver. 21. Confer. DEMOSTH. in PHILIP. O-rat. I. Theophrast. Charact. de Famiger.

(g) Rom. v. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 22.

of the Heathen World, the famous SOCRATES, who seems to have expressed himself with some diffidence upon this article, a little before his Death (*b*). But neither he, nor any other of the Philosophers, had any notion of a Resurrection of the Body. “ They
 “ laughed at it, and looked upon it as a thing
 “ impossible, and unworthy of God to do,
 “ and without any example to convince them
 “ that it might be done (*i*).”

Let none, however, imagine, that the notion of a Resurrection carries any absurdity in it, or some repugnancy to right Reason. For a thing may be above, and beyond the first discovery of unenlightened Reason; and yet, after it is discovered by divine Revelation, appear to be perfectly rational and proper in itself. Reason, so far as it goes, is the same in all intelligent beings. And so, divine Revelation is nothing but the Reason of God, made plain to the narrow mind of man, by means whereof we may clearly see, *that* to be reasonable, which otherwise we
 neither

(*b*) Vid. PLATO PHÆD.

(*i*) WHITBY in 2 Tim. i. 10. Note—The contempt which was cast upon the Doctrine of a Resurrection by CELSUS, and others, plainly shews, by the way, what was the ancient belief of the Christian Church, as to this article of Faith; besides, the express testimony of J. MARTYR, ATHENAGORAS, TERTULLIAN, &c. concerning the Resurrection of the *body* or *flesh*. But the most ancient Creeds are imperfect, not only as to this, but some other acknowledged articles of Faith.

neither *did*, nor *could* see at all. This Observation is applicable to the case in hand. For, though human Reason could not make the first discovery of a Resurrection, yet now, as divine Reason and Wisdom hath revealed it, the thing must appear to be rational enough in itself to any unprejudiced and impartial mind. There is no improbability, and much less any impossibility in the notion. For, *why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the Dead?* (k)—Surely it cannot be pretended with any shadow of Reason, that the thing is *impossible*. For, nothing is impossible with God, but what implies a contradiction; and it implies no contradiction to suppose, that a thing, which once existed, may be made to exist again, in one form or another, by the same almighty Power, which first produced it into being. He, that said, (l) *Let there be light, and there was light*, needs only to say—*Arise ye Dead*, and the Dead shall arise; *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last Trump, the Trump of God*.—And as the thing is not impossible, so there is nothing *improbable* in the notion of a Resurrection. For, in his original frame and constitution, man is a compound being, consisting of a Soul and a Body. Therefore the Soul of man, without his Body, is not a whole human being. Is it not then more likely and probable in itself,

(k) Acts xxvi. 8.

(l) Gen. i. 3.

self, that there will be a Resurrection of the Body, than that the Soul, after Death, shall always remain solitary, and alone without it's mate? Embodied spirits may be supposed capable of those rewards and punishments, which are suitably adapted to the particular virtues and vices of such mixed beings. Besides, those *personally-distinguishing features* may be visibly impressed upon the face of the Resurrection-Body, which will answer some wise ends and purposes, in the exemplary distribution of divine justice, at the great day of recompence (*m*).

After all, we are not indebted to human Reason, but to divine Revelation for the curious discovery of a Resurrection. And here, indeed, we tread upon firm and solid ground. The Christian Revelation hath carried this point to an absolute certainty. For, one of the *first principles of the doctrine of Christ, is, a Resurrection of the Dead* (*n*); whereof his own Resurrection is both a pledge and a pattern at once. *Now is Christ risen from the Dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept, or that are asleep* (*o*). Thus hath our Saviour Jesus Christ abolished Death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the Gospel (*p*).

So

(*m*) Vid. Quæst. & Respons. ad Orth. Num. 60. in Op. J. MARTYR. Pag. 426. Edit. Colon.

(*n*) Heb. vi. 12.

(*o*) 1 Cor. xv. 20. 1 Thess. iv. 13.

(*p*) 2 Tim. i. 10.

So much for the first thing proposed to be considered, viz. the *Resurrection*, as it respects those persons, who shall live again after they were dead (*q*).

(2.) Proceed we to consider, *the Life*, with reference to those, that shall live without dying at all. *I am* (said Christ) *the Resurrection*,

(*q*) Note—“The word ἀνάστασις was never used in Scripture to signify any thing, but the *Resurrection of the body*; i. e. of men, whose bodies were destroyed, and which being raised, *men* are said to be raised; because the nature of man consists, in the conjunction of soul and body.” J. CLERIC, in Matt. xxii. 31. As to the *Sadducees*, “who denied a Resurrection, their words opposed only the *Resurrection of the body*; for they knew well enough, that *marrying* was a thing, which respected only the body, and had no place at all among separate spirits.” Therefore, when they said of the Woman, who had married seven Brethren, one after another, *In the Resurrection, whose Wife of them is she*, Luke xx. 33. the meaning is, whose Wife is *she to be*; or, whose Wife *shall she be*; as it is expressed in St. Matthew and Mark. See WHITBY in loc. and 1 Cor. xv. 35. Moreover, when God styles himself the *God of Abraham*, &c. it is meant of the *man* Abraham, &c. And *he is not the God of the Dead*, (that is, of *dead men*, never to be restored to life) *but of the living*; for (though *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, are now dead men, they) *all live to him*; or, with respect to him, i. e. God, whose almighty Power can raise them from the Dead when he pleases, and whose promise to be *their God*, hath engaged him to do it at a proper time. Therefore, though some have supposed, that the word *Resurrection*, in Luke xx. 33. “signifies a future state simply;” yet our Saviour’s argument against the *Sadducees*, appears to prove a Resurrection, in their notion of the thing, as before explained. Vid. DIODATI, & DU VEIL, in Mat. xxii. 31. WHITBY on the Millennium. Chap. III.

urrection, and (so he adds) the Life—who-so-ever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.

This is a great mystery, that any of the sons of mortal men, should undergo such a change alive, as to become thereby capable of living for ever. But yet we are assured, this will be the blessed Privilege of those Christian Believers, who shall be *alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, &c. (r).* The change will be instantaneous and sudden, from corruption to incorruption; and thus *mortality shall at once be swallowed up of life.* After the pattern of holy *Enoch*, and *Elijah*, the *living* Saints will be immediately translated to Heaven, without any painful separation of soul and body by Death. But then it is necessary, that their corporeal nature undergo a spiritual change. For, *flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption (s).* (However, let it not be said, that “*flesh and blood* is flesh and blood still; whatever “ change or transmutation it may undergo.” For, that same divine power, which *changed Water into Wine (t)*, can easily and instantly produce such a change in our bodily substance, as that it shall no more properly be

(r) 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

(s) Ver. 50.

(t) John ii. 9. iv. 46.

flesh and blood still, than the *Water*, after it was made *Wine*, was Water still. But this by the way.)

The like wonderful change may be supposed to have passed upon the body of our Lord and Saviour himself, at the time of his *Ascension*, or translation to Heaven. For, Christ did not rise from the Dead with a *spiritual body*, but with a body of *flesh and bones*; the very same body, in substance, that was laid in the Grave, where, during it's short continuance there, it *saw no corruption* (u); that so all, who had been intimately acquainted with him before, might readily know him again after he was risen, and be thoroughly satisfied, that he was the very same identical Person, who was *crucified, dead, and buried*; and consequently, that his Resurrection was a real, not a pretended thing. *Behold my hands, and my feet*, (said he) *that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have* (x). — But the body of Christ is now a *glorious body*, as St. Paul terms it (y). Therefore, some time after his *Resurrection*, and most probably at his *Ascension* into Heaven, when his converse with

(u) Psal. xvi. 9, 10. Acts ii. 31. xiii. 35—37. Note—This shews the propriety of Christ's rising again the *third day*; for had he been *τετραπαιος*, i. e. *dead four days*, like *Lazarus*, his body might, in the course of nature, have been *tetrous*, or *putrid*. John xi. 39.

(x) Luke xxiv. 39.

(y) Phil. iii. 21.

with men was at an end, his sacred body underwent a transforming change, whereby it's specific gravity being altered, and becoming lighter, perhaps, than air, he might the more easily soar upwards, and mount aloft, till his gazing Disciples lost sight of him in the clouds; those *clouds of Heaven* with which every eye shall see him coming again at the great Day.—In like manner, at the sound of the Trumpet, both the dead and the living Saints, being all respectively changed in their bodily substance, *shall be caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air*, far above the smoke and flame of this burning Globe.

And now, methinks, a pious and a grateful curiosity should prompt us to inquire, who is the kind Author and Dispenser of this great Privilege, viz. a blessed and glorious Immortality. And so I proceed to consider,

Secondly. The immediate *Author* and Dispenser of this Privilege. And this is our Lord Jesus Christ. For, says he, *I am the Resurrection, and the Life, &c.* And, when our Saviour asked *Martha*, *Believest thou this?* *She saith unto him, yea, Lord, I believe, that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world* (x). A very remarkable answer! For, it plainly shews, that it was an article of faith in the Jewish Church

at this time, that the *Messiah should raise the Dead*; as some of the Jewish Writers themselves also maintain (a). This was the *hope of Israel* (b). In which view, Christ appears to be called the *Prince of Life*, and *our Life itself* (c). Now, as this is a matter of pure Revelation, it is from the holy Scriptures alone, that we must take our account of it. And from thence I shall deduce the following Observations, which will reflect some light upon this divine Dispensation.

(1.) A blessed Immortality is a Privilege of the *Covenant of Grace*. For, as Death is the penalty of Sin (d), so it is a Dispensation of mercy, that this penalty is removed. It is *through the loving kindness of God our Saviour toward man—that being justified by his Grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life* (e).

(2.) This gracious Covenant is ratified and sealed with the Blood of Christ, as the Redeemer of the world. For he is the only *Mediator between God and men; who gave himself a Ransom for all* (f). Thus hath he *ransomed us from the Grave, and redeemed us from Death. For the wages of Sin is Death; but*
the

(a) Vid. P. D. HUE T. Demonst. Evang. Prop. IX. Cap. 39. Sec. 1.

(b) Acts xxviii. 20. xxiii. 6. xxvi. 6—8, &c.

(c) Acts iii. 15. Col. iii. 4.

(d) Rom. v. 12, &c.

(e) Tit. iii. 4, 7.

(f) 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.

the Gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord (g). Now, in consequence of Christ's mediation, and as a reward of his transcendent merit, I add,

(3.) The execution of this Covenant is committed to the hands of Christ, whom God hath ordained and appointed to raise the Dead, and to judge all mankind. For, *as the Father hath life in himself, so he hath given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgement also, because he is the Son of man (h).* Accordingly, Christ hath solemnly declared, *(i) The hour is coming, when all that are in their Graves shall hear his Voice, and come forth; they that have done good, to the Resurrection of Life; and they that have done evil, to the Resurrection of Damnation.*—But, that I may not be further tedious, I leave you to enlarge upon these things, in your private meditations, and hasten to the third and last general head of Discourse, which is to consider,

Thirdly. The happy *Persons* who are intitled to this Privilege of a blessed Immortality. In the general, they are all true Believers, and real Christians. For, says Christ, *He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and be-*

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lieveth

(g) Rom. vi. 23.

(h) John v. 26, 27. See Bishop PEARSON on the Creed. Artic. VII.

(i) Ver. 28, 29.

liveth in me, shall never die. But, that we may better understand the true character of such persons, let me premise this Remark, that to be a Believer in Christ, includes more than a bare *assent* of the mind, to the Truth of his Gospel, or divine Mission; though this also is implied and supposed. For, in mere assent, or opinion, there is little virtue, worth, or excellency, otherways than as it is connected with moral temper, and good dispositions. Therefore,

(1.) A true and right Believer, is a sincere lover of sacred Truth; and so this worthy temper disposes him to submit and yield to the divine evidence of the Gospel, which therefore he embraces as a Revelation from God, with a full assurance of faith. On the other hand, it is the character and property of Unbelievers, that they *receive not the love of the Truth* (*k*). Those unhappy men *love darkness more than light, because their deeds are evil*; which is the just ground and matter of their condemnation (*l*).

(2.) A true Believer hath the honesty and resolution, to make a *profession* of the Truth, in the open face of the world, and strenuously maintain the Cause of God and Christ, against all opposition (*m*). This part of the christian character, the Apostle describes and recom-

(*k*) 2 Theff. ii. 10.

(*l*) John iii. 19.

(*m*) See *Regeneration*; or a Discourse on being born again.

recommends in the following words. (n) *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering—not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.* To forsake the Christian Worship, is an eminent degree of Apostacy, which hath a dangerous tendency to the greatest of all. But that person, who gives due and stated attendance on the sacred Ministrations of the Gospel, acts a worthy part, well becoming a Christian Believer.

(3.) A true Believer is one, whose *life* and practice agrees to his profession. For, Christianity is not a speculative, but a practical science; it is the art of living well, of being and of doing good. Therefore, the faith of a real Christian, is an active, lively, operative faith. His *faith works by love* (o). It works by love both to God and man; for he *loves God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself.* Which divine and God-like principle, is productive of all Gospel obedience. Thus the *life*, which a true Believer *lives in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God* (p); conformable to the excellent spirit, and holy design of his heavenly Gospel. I shall only add,

(4.) A true Believer strives to excel himself, by persevering endeavours after spiritual perfection, still retaining a modest, humble
U 4 sense,

(n) Heb. x. 23—25.

(o) Gal. v. 6.

(p) Gal. ii. 20.

ſenſe, of his own unworthineſs. He knows very well, that he muſt be *faithful unto Death*, that ſo he may receive *a crown of Life*. But, whatever progreſs or improvement he makes in Religion, through the whole courſe of his life, he hath learned of Chriſt, to ſay, *I am an unprofitable Servant*, having done nothing, but what it was my *duty* to do (q). Diſclaiming therefore all pretence of merit in himſelf, (for who can be profitable to his Maker) he wholly relies upon the free Grace and Goodneſs of God, as revealed in the Goſpel, for acceptance and reward; *looking for the mercy of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, unto eternal life* (r). Nor ſhall he look in vain. For, what ſays our great Redeemer? *I am the Reſurrection, and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live; and whoſoever liveth, and believeth in me, ſhall never die.*

To conclude my Diſcourſe upon this Subject, where I began, let me aſk every one of you, that ſame Queſtion, which our bleſſed Lord propoſed to *Martha*, viz. *Believeſt thou this?*

Believeſt thou this? If ſo; *meditate* much, frequently, and ſeriously upon the final conſummation of all things. Let all eyes be fixed upon that grand Event, and let all ears attentively liſten to the loud alarm of the laſt Trump,

(q) Luke xvii. 10.

(r) Jude, Ver. 21.

Trump, and *the Voice of the Archangel*, saying, “ Arise ye Dead, and come to judgment.”

Again. Believeſt thou this ? Then *moderate* thy grief, fears, and trouble, for pious Christian Friends departed. *I would not have you to be ignorant, Brethren, concerning them that are aſleep, that ye ſorrow not, even as others, who have no hope. For, if we believe that Jeſus died, and roſe again, even ſo them alſo, who ſleep in Jeſus, will God bring with him.—Wherefore comfort one another with theſe words (s).*

Once more.—Believeſt thou this ? Abate thy own *fears* of Death. For, Death ſhall be *ſwallowed up of victory* ; and the victory crowned with triumphant Immortality. Thus we ſhall *reign in life* with Chriſt, *the Lord of Glory*, for ever and ever.

Finally, my fellow Chriſtians, let us all have our *converſation in Heaven*, and behave like citizens of the upper World ; *from whence alſo we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt ; who ſhall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things unto himſelf (t).* O ye Chriſtian Believers, in the name of God, live ſuitably to your glorious hopes and expectations ; and ſo, *when Chriſt, who is our life*

(s) 1 Theſſ. iv. 13, &c.

(t) Phil. iii. 20, 21.

life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory (u). Now the God of Peace, who brought again from the Dead the Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

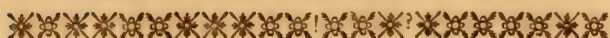
(u) Colos. iii. 4.





DISCOURSE XIII.

The Fashion of this World passing
away.



I COR. vii. 31.

—*The Fashion of this World passeth away.*

HE altering state and condition
 T of this present World so affect-
 ingly appears in the successive
 triumphs of *Death* over the chil-
 dren of men from age to age ; and we have
 such frequent instances of mortality amongst
 our Friends and Acquaintance, as well as feel-
 ing intimations of it within ourselves ; that a
 Subject of this nature must afford very suit-
 able and seasonable matter of reflection at all
 times. But, when we further attend to the
 great fluctuation and instability of all human
 affairs, and seriously consider the various
 changes and vicissitudes accompanying the
life of man here upon earth ; in this view,
 the suitableness and propriety of the Subject
 before

before us, will appear in a stronger light. For, whether we reflect upon the many changes, that happen in the course of a man's life, or upon his last and greatest change at Death, it is awfully plain and certain, that *the Fashion of this World passeth away*.

It was a saying of DEMOCRITUS (a),
 “ The World is a Theatre; Life a short turn
 “ upon the Stage; thou enterest, lookest a-
 “ bout thee, goest off.” The same senti-
 ment, and apt similitude, seems to be couch-
 ed in St. Paul's words, now proposed to con-
 sideration. For, when he says, *the Fashion*
of this world passeth away, his language may
 be borrowed from the Stage, alluding to the
shifting of the Scenes, with the change of Ac-
tors in a Play. And so his meaning, in it's
 full extent, may be conceived to be *this*.
 “ The Fashion, or the *Scheme*, of this World
 “ is continually altering in relation both to
 “ persons and things; the scenes are always
 “ shifting in this great Theatre, and will sus-
 “ tain successive changes, until the grand *ca-*
 “ *tastrophe* comes on, and the whole scaf-
 “ folding shall be taken down, at the final
 “ period, and consummation of all things;
 “ when the whole Plan of divine Providence,
 “ relating to this lower system of the Uni-
 “ verse,

(a) ὁ κόσμος σκηνή, ὁ βίος παράδοτος, ἥλθες, ἶδες, ἀπῆλθες.
 DEMOCRIT.

“ verse, shall be acted off, and compleatly
 “ finished.”

With what view and design the Apostle made this Remark, that the *Fashion of this World passeth away*, I shall have occasion to observe hereafter, when we come to the practical use and improvement of this very serious and weighty Subject. Therefore, without taking any particular notice of the Context at present, I shall proceed directly to the point in hand, which I will endeavour to illustrate by the following Observations.

I. There is a general *Scheme* or Plan of divine Providence, the several parts of which, are successively working off, in the different ages of the World, and in every distinct period of time. *Known unto God are all his works, from the begining of the World (b)*; and they are accomplished in due time and order, according to the purpose of him, who *worketh all things, after the counsel of his own Will (c)*. The supreme and sovereign Disposer of all events, ever pursues, with a steady unerring hand, the grand model and design, which is formed in his own eternal Mind; but yet, so as that he always wills and chuses what is best and wisest upon the whole, taking in the entire system of his counsels together. Far from acting arbitrarily, in the constitution and government of the World,
 the

(b) Acts xv. 18.

(c) Eph. i. 11.

the divine proceedings are invariably and uniformly conducted by the most perfect rules of wisdom and goodness. For, his own moral Perfections prescribe laws to his absolute Sovereignty ; and though God may do *what he pleases*, without being accountable to any one but to himself ; yet, to himself, and to his own Perfections, he is accountable. Consequently, he can never do any thing, or *please* to do any thing, but what is consistent with the moral rectitude, and essential goodness, of his blessed and glorious nature.

Therefore, when I speak of a *general Scheme* of Providence, according to which God governs the World, I hope, none will mistake my meaning so far, as to imagine, that I am creating a divine Tyranny, or introducing a blind Fatality, where Reason and Rectitude have no concern or sway. For, on the contrary, the System and Œconomy of divine Providence, which I assert and maintain, is not an arbitrary constitution, or administration, but it is such a Scheme of things, as is formed, approved, and executed, by the most consummate wisdom and goodness, acting in concert with each other.

This excellent and glorious Scheme, as it lies in the all-comprehending Mind of God, is an entire and finished Plan ; but, as it turns out, to the view of the World, it appears only by small parcels at a time ; just as the several parts of the divine System are working
off

off by degrees, one after another. One scene of this great *Drama* (to keep up to the supposed allusion in the Text) is run off in one period ; at another season, a new one opens ; and this change of scenes introduces a great variety of incidents, in the course of human affairs, the affairs of Churches and Nations, of private Families, and particular Persons. If, especially in the greater revolutions of the World, the change is not always quick and sudden, but things go on in a strait and even course for a long while together ; no time is lost with respect to the Deity, who lives for ever, to direct the whole machinery both of public and private affairs. And so, what is left undone at one season, may be regularly accomplished at another. Because *one day is with the Lord, as a thousand years ; and a thousand years as one day (d)*. For, “ with respect to endless duration, there is “ no difference between much and little (e).” Every providential event therefore will come up in it’s proper time and order ; *which in his times (in his own times, if it is not done in ours) he will shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords ; who only hath Immortality, dwelling in that Light, which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, or can see :*

(d) 2 Pet. iii. 8.

(e) PLUTARCH, de Consol. Op. Vol. II. Page 111.

*see : to whom be honour and power everlasting.
Amen (f).*

The spiritual nature, and glorious essence of God, is not more invisible, than his councils are unsearchable, and his deep-laid designs impenetrable; until he is pleased to unravel and unfold them himself; otherwise, could we comprehend all the Scheme at once, and clearly discern, how all the seeming irregularities of Providence, in particular Dispensations, contribute to the beauty and perfection of the whole; we should doubtless, greatly admire and applaud the wonderful contrivance and harmony of the divine System. To see the whole *Plot unravelled* another day, and observe a curious *unity of design* preserved throughout, from first to last; all things winding up, in the issue, into one single point, namely, the Glory of God displayed in the general good of his Creation; what an entertaining sight will this be both to Men and Angels! At present, we have but a partial, and imperfect view of things. The general Plan is concealed from our notice, in a great measure; what we see of it *now*, is only some small parcels at a time, as the manifold wisdom of God sees fit to introduce the particular parts of his grand model and design.

By this representation then, it appears very plain and obvious, that *the Fashion of this
World*

World passeth away, as the face of things alters, the state of human affairs changes, and new scenes open out to common view, in this great Theatre of the World; according to the different purposes, which divine Providence hath to execute in any period of time. That almost infinite and endless variety of incidents or events, which form and diversify the general System, are all exhibited in due time and place. And thus, of course, the state of mankind assumes different appearances, putting on changeable and varying aspects from time to time, as the several parts of the divine Scheme, are working off, one after another, in a regular series and succession. This notion the royal Preacher seems to have suggested in the following passage. (g) *To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under Heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die.* And in the conclusion of all he adds, (h) *He, (that is God) hath made every thing beautiful in his time.*

I proceed now to observe,

II. This present World is a *public Theatre*, where all mankind are in their turn and time, to act their part for Eternity. The holy Psalmist, at the first appearance, asks a very strange question, when he expostulates with

(g) Eccles. iii. 1—8.

(h) Ver. 11.

God, in the following terms. (i) *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* Understanding him to speak of the *vanity of man as mortal*, his words only imply, what indeed is a great truth, viz. that upon supposition, frail, mortal men were made to exist in this World alone, without any prospect of another and better life, in that case they would seem *to be made in vain*; and for no valuable end, worthy of God, or suitable to the nature and capacity of such a rank and species of created beings (k).

But, since it is absolutely certain, that an infinitely wise and good God doth nothing in vain, it must follow, by natural and just consequence, that mankind, as mortal, are made with a design to exist not only in this World, but likewise in a World to come. And so this present temporary state, is only a state of discipline, trial, and probation, for a future one of recompence and retribution. When therefore any persons have acted their part in life, whether well or ill, they must go off the Stage, to make room for others, and to receive their own proper reward. Thus, *the Fashion of this World passeth away*, as there is a continual change of *persons*, who come to take their turn upon the Stage of life, and then move off again, in a constant succession of ages, and generations. One comes,

(i) Psal. lxxxix. 47.

(k) See How's Works. Vol. I. Page 633, &c.

comes, and another goes. *One generation passeth away, and another generation comes (l).* And so presents a new sett of faces, figures, and characters. The men of the last Age, for instance, are gone, and stept aside behind the Curtain, to make room for us, their unworthy successors. And, in like manner, must we also withdraw in a short time, and retire within the Vail, that we may give place to another (I wish it may prove a better) generation.

III. As every person hath his proper part to act in this great Theatre, so different persons, and very often the same persons too, have different parts assigned them. There is one general Calling and Profession, for which we are all designed, by the great Director of human life. *Religion* is our common business, and great concern. This is that *good part*, which every one should *chuse* himself (*m*), and recommend to others. But then, in what private capacity, and under what particular circumstances of life, this must be done, is a matter which admits of great variety and diversification.

One man is appointed to serve God and his generation, in one capacity ; another under a different character. One person moves in an higher sphere ; another is placed in a low condition ; and a third occupies a mid-

X 2

dle

(l) Eccles. i. 4.

(m) Luke x. 42.

dle station.—Nay, (so great is the uncertainty of all human affairs in this changing World) many times the very same persons have a great mixture and variety of circumstances allotted to them, in the course of their lives. One while they enjoy the sweet benign influences of a smiling Providence; *the Candle of the Lord shines upon their Tabernacle*, and their affairs are in a flourishing way. At another season, the case is quite altered with them, and they are under a dark cloud. The Stage of Life began to brighten with brilliant scenes of joy and pleasure; but, behold, on a sudden, it blackens upon us, presents us with nothing but images of distress, and we live, as it were, in deep tragedy.

Nor is this the case only with bad men, concerning whom the Psalmist says, (n) *I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.* Good men themselves, and some of the best of God's servants, have sometimes their share in these reverses, and contrary turns of Providence, (witness the case of Job) and so, like the holy Apostles of Christ, they are *made a spectacle to the World, and to Angels, and to Men; exposed*, as it were, *in a public Theatre* (o). Therefore, in this further respect, *the Fashion of this World passeth away*, as the state of human

(n) Psal. xxxvii. 35, 36.

(o) 1 Cor. iv. 9.

man affairs, and the condition of human Life, is liable and subject to great alterations, seldom remaining *fixed* for any long time together. Prosperity and Adversity, Adversity and Prosperity, are the alternate changes, that successively attend the life of man upon earth. For wise ends and purposes, *God hath set the one over against the other (p)*. “ These things “ interchange with each other (q).”

IV. When once any persons have acted their whole part in Life, and are gone off the Stage, they shall return hither no more. Our leaving this World, will be a long and final farewell. (r) *As the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the Grave, shall come up no more*, (that is, to live and act his part over again in this World ; for so it follows) *He shall return no more to his House ; neither shall his place know him any more*. His place in his Family shall know him no more ; his place in the World shall know him no more ; and his place in the Church of God shall then know him no more. Whatever station a person filled in life, and whatever business or profession he followed, civil or sacred, all is over with him, and quite at an end, when he puts off the body, and

X 3

quits

(p) Eccles. vii. 14.

(q) ΣΟΦΗΟC L. Ajax. Flagel. Ver. II II. Ερται παραλ-
λαξ ταυτα.

(r) Job vii. 9, 10.

quits the Stage.—And thus, *the Fashion of this World passeth away*; so effectually, as that we must all of us have done with it *shortly*, and with all our concerns in it for ever. This mortal Life, with it's various amusements and enjoyments, is but a fleeting Shadow, a mere *Vapour, which appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away* (s). Riches, Honours, and Pleasures, those airy Phantoms, and gay idols of Fancy, which strike mens eyes at present with such a glare, how soon, alas, will they all disappear; like the visions of the night, or the *shadow of a cloud*, or even *the Dream of shadow*! (t) *The World passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the Will of God abideth for ever.*

V. After all mankind have finished their several parts, and the whole Scheme of Providence is acted off, so far as concerns this World of ours, the Theatre will be demolished, the Stage broken up, and the whole Scaffolding taken down, at the consummation of all things, by the dissolution of this material frame. This Earth, on which we tread and live, will be destroyed by Fire at the last Day, that *great and notable Day of the Lord*; or, converted, perhaps, into a *smoaking, blazing, wandering Comet*, to the terror and surprize of Worlds unknown. So that in this awful respect, it is true, that the *Fashion of this World*
passeth

(s) James iv. 14.

(t) 1 John ii. 17.

passeth away. For the *Day is coming* (and how near it may be, none of us can tell) *in the which the Heavens shall pass away* (pass away) *with a great noise; and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the Earth also, and the Works, that are therein, shall be burnt up* (u).

It is observable, that the notion of a Conflagration, or burning of the Earth, was entertained by some of the ancient Philosophers, particularly the *Stoics* (x). And besides what hints they might receive from *Tradition* upon that head, there are some appearances in lower nature, that seem to portend this great and amazing event.

Not to mention the *approximation* of the Earth to the Sun, which may dry and parch it's surface by degrees, till at last it takes fire; not to insist upon the near approach of a *Comet*, which, as some have supposed, will alter the position and course of the Earth, so as may cause it to move towards the Sun, with a greater velocity: whatever external causes of this nature may be assigned, it is obvious to remark that, not only on the *surface*, but also in the *bowels* of the Earth, materials are provided in abundance, for the general Conflagration. Those *Vulcanoes*, and burning Mountains, which are to be seen in sundry parts of the World, as well as frequent

X 4

Earth-

(u) 2 Pet. iii. 10.

(x) Vid. J. LIPS. Physiolog. Stoic. Lib. II. Cap. 22.

Earth-quakes, are a plain indication of this matter. But, if there had been no visible symptoms of second causes, tending and operating that way, the same almighty Hand, which at first reared, and erected this magnificent Theatre of action, can easily take it all down again, by one means or another, and blow up the universal flame by *the breath of his mouth*. And that this will be the case in fact, we have repeated assurances given us in the *Scriptures of Truth* (y).

If we would here let our thoughts have free liberty, and give them full scope upon the Subject, what a strong and awful Idea might any one form to himself of this grand *Catastrophe*! But the following representation may suffice for the present, to possess our minds with some lively apprehensions concerning it. (z) *And I saw a great white Throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the Earth and the Heavens fled away. And I saw the Dead, small and great, stand before God; and the Books were opened: and another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life; and the Dead were judged out of those things which were written in the Books, according to their Works. And the Sea gave up the Dead which were in it; and Death and Hell (or the Grave) delivered up the Dead which were in them* (that is, all the Dead, buried and

(y) Psal. cii. 25. Heb. i. 10—12. 2 Pet. iii. 7, 10.

(z) Rev. xx. 11—15;

and unburied) and they were judged every man, according to their Works. And Death and Hell were cast into the lake of fire—This is the second Death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of Life, (the Register kept of good men, from the beginning of the World) (a) was cast into the lake of fire. By the lake of fire, perhaps, is meant the glowing Earth, where the wicked may be left to perish in the flames; after the example of Sodom and Gomorrha, sustaining the vengeance of eternal fire (b). For, as the Apostle Peter hath told us, (c) The Heavens and the Earth which are now—are reserved unto fire, against the Day of judgement, and perdition of ungodly men. But, instead of indulging conjectures upon this head, I shall rather say, in the words of the same Apostle, (d) Seeing then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness—Looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the Day of God, wherein the Heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the Elements shall melt with fervent heat.

VI. In the next World, a new Scene of things will take place, and the state of human affairs will be quite altered and changed, from what it is at present; so that the Fashion

(a) See PEIRCE on Phil. iv. 3.

(b) Jude. Ver. 7.

(c) 2 Pet. iii. 7.

(d) Ver. 11, 12.

tion of this World passeth away absolutely and entirely; and another sort of World is to succeed, and come after it. *In that World*, e. g. (to mention a case very suitable to the scope and occasion of the Apostle's Discourse in this place) I say, in that World, *they neither marry, nor are given in marriage* (e). This one circumstance must naturally produce a great and sensible change in the human state and condition. We shall then find ourselves in a new World indeed; for all those animal passions and affections, which are connected with the particular relations in Life here upon Earth, will of course cease, and expire in that World, together with the relations themselves. And thus, *they that have had Wives*, will then strictly be, as *though they had none*.

It was therefore an idle Cavil of the *Saducees*, when they put the case of a Woman, who had married seven Brethren, one after another, according to the Jewish Law, and thereupon asked our Saviour, *In the Resurrection, whose Wife is she?* i. e. is to be. For as our Lord told them, *The Children of this World marry, and are given in marriage. But they who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that World, and the Resurrection from the Dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; for they are equal (or like) unto the Angels, and are*
the

(e) Matt. xxii. 30.

the children of God, being children of the Resurrection (and so a different kind of *Offspring*, from what they were before, with respect to their bodily nature) (*f*). Thus all the particular relations in Life, with their correspondent affections, proper and peculiar to the *animal Body*, will be extinct in Heaven; all will be absorpt, and swallowed up in the common relation and affection, which the glorified Saints bear to God, and to each other, as the Children of their heavenly Father. In consequence of which, it must evidently appear, that *the Fashion of this World passeth away* entirely, and compleatly; without any further illustrations of the matter.

To sum up all, that hath been offered, in a few words. There is a general *Scheme*, or Plan of divine Providence, the several parts of which are successively working off, in the different ages of the World, and in every distinct period of time. This present World is a public Theatre, where all mankind are, in their turn and time, to act their part for Eternity. As every person hath his proper part to act, in this great Theatre, so different persons, and very often the same persons too, have different parts assigned them. When once any persons have acted their whole part in Life, and are gone off the Stage, they shall return hither no more. After all mankind have finished their several parts, and the whole

whole Scheme of Providence is acted off, so far as concerns this World of ours, the Theatre will be demolished, the Stage will be broken up, and the whole Scaffolding taken down, at the consummation of all things, by the dissolution of this material frame. Finally, in the next World, a new Scene of things will take place, and the state of human affairs will be quite altered and changed, from what it is at present; so that *the Fashion of this World passeth away*, absolutely, and entirely, and another sort of World is to succeed, and come after it.

What Reflections then may be properly made upon this extensive view of the Subject before us?

(1.) Should we not be led hereby to recognize and revere the providential rule and government of God, as the supreme Director of all affairs, in this great Theatre of the World? But here *a Deity is introduced*, (g) with the greatest propriety, and not without *a just occasion* (h). For the government of the World, is a Province peculiarly fit and proper for the *Maker* of it; nor is it beneath his heavenly Majesty, to take into his own hands, the care of his own Works. And happy it is for us, that our Persons, our Friends, and all our Affairs, are in such hands; the
hands

(g) θεὸς ἀπὸ μυχῶν.

(h) Nec Deus interfit, nisi dignus vindice nodus incidit.—HORAT. de Art. Poetic.

hands of infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness. With what comfort and satisfaction, with what delightful reverence, and pleasing awe; with what humble submission, and chearful resignation, should we devoutly eye God, in every Event, through all the changing Scenes of Life. For—the *Laws of Nature* are the *Laws of God*. And if so much as a *sparrow*, (a thing of little worth) *shall not fall to the ground without your Father*, what a watchful Providence does he exercise over all his creatures, both *small and great* !
(i) Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows (k); and so may rationally expect a proportionally greater share in the divine Regards.

(2.) We should also learn from hence, to moderate our desires and affections, towards every thing in this World. For this is the practical Use and Improvement of the Subject, which we are directed to make of it, by the Apostle in the Context, where he expresses himself in these terms. *But this I say, Brethren, the time is short; it remaineth, that both they that have Wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this World, as not abusing*

(i) — ὡς ἐπιμελῆς σμικρῶν ἐστὶ θεοῖ, οὐκ ἧττον ἢ τῶν μενέθει διαφερόντων. ΠΛΑΤΟ. de Legib. Lib. x.

(k) Matt. x. 23, 31.

abusing it; (or as not using it) (*l*); for (so it follows) *the Fashion of this World passeth away*. You see then, the consideration that *the Fashion of this World passeth away*, is the very argument urged by *St. Paul*, to recommend an holy indifferency to all earthly things, and temporal enjoyments.

It we keep in mind the supposed *Allusion* in the Text, we shall discern a peculiar beauty and force in his Language and Sentiment. For, the Actors in a Play, whether it be *Comedy*, or *Tragedy*, do not act their own proper and personal concerns, but only *personate* and mimic the characters and conditions of other men. And so when they *weep*, in acting some tragical part, it is *as though they wept not*; and there is more shew and appearance, than truth and reality, of grief and sorrow in the case. On the other hand, if they *rejoice* in acting some brighter Scene, it is *as though they rejoiced not*; it is but a feigned semblance of joy, and forced air of mirth and gaiety, which they exhibit to the spectators, no real inward gladness of heart. If they seem to contract *Marriages*, or act the *Merchant*, or personate a *Gentleman of Fortune*, still it is nothing but *fiction*. And so, when the Play is over, they *have no Wives*, *no Possessions* or goods, *no enjoyments of the World*, in consequence of such representations. In like manner, by this apt comparison, I imagine,

(*l*) Vid. BEZA in loc.

gine, the Apostle would teach us to moderate our desires and affections towards every thing in this World; and rather, as it were, to *personate* such as things, as matters of a foreign nature, than to incorporate ourselves with them, as our own proper, and personal concerns. And, in good serious earnest, why should not (so far as may be consistent with a regular discharge of the duties incumbent upon us, in our several stations and relations of Life respectively) I say, why should not an holy indifferency to all the transitory affairs of the present Life, be produced in every one of our Souls, by the consideration that *the Fashion of this World passeth away*; and in the expectation of another World, the Fashion whereof never passeth away, but remains unalterably fixed for ever? Let us, my dear Friends, think of this matter closely; and pray God to impress our minds, and affect our hearts with it in a proper manner, that so we may walk more by faith, and less by sight and sense.

(3.) Should we not all be excited to act our part well in Life, with divine assistance, that so we may be prepared for an happy Death, and go off the Stage with satisfaction, honour, and applause? But let us, by all means, take care of one thing, viz. that none of us be mere actors in Religion; that is to say, *hypocrites* (which is but another name for the same thing) Let us not theatrically
 personate,

personate, but truly realize in ourselves, the religious Character. In plain terms, let us all, under a Christian Profession, take all possible care to *be*, what we *appear*. And then we shall not be afraid, or ashamed, to appear, what we are, when every mask is pulled off, when every disguise is laid aside, and all persons are exposed, in their own proper colours, to the public view of the whole World.

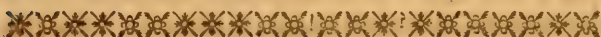
In that all-discovering Day, think within yourselves, how great will be the terror and confusion of detected *hypocrites*, and impostors! But, on the other side, how great will be the comfort and joy of every good Man, and sincere Christian, who stands forth approved of God, and his own conscience! Heaven and Earth will pronounce him blessed, and receive him with an universal *Euge*. *Well done*, will his Saviour-Judge say to him, *good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*; and be happy with me for ever in Heaven. That both I, and every one of you, may acquit ourselves so well in Life, and act our part with such dignity and decorum, as to *be thought worthy to obtain* that applauding Sentence, God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen and Amen.





DISCOURSE XIV.

On working out our own Salvation.



PHIL. ii. 12, 13.

— *Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling. For, it is God who worketh in you, both to will, and to do, of his good Pleasure.*

IN these Words, we have a great Duty enjoined upon Christians, with a proper *Argument* to enforce it.

The Duty itself is described and expressed in these terms, *Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling*. By the *work of Salvation*, I understand here, not the *work of Charity* alone (a), but the *work of Religion* in general. And, why Christians should give alms *with fear and trembling*, is not very obvious; unless this Duty be considered, as having a connexion with, and some influence

(a) PEIRCE in loc.

upon their eternal Salvation. Therefore St. Paul seems here to excite Christians to the great work of Religion in general, by this Argument, *For, it is God who worketh in you, both to will, and to do, of his good Pleasure.*

It is true, sometimes the Apostle speaks of charitable Contributions, in similar language (*b*) ; but there is no necessity for so restraining the sense of his words before us. In the like terms he also speaks of the work and business of Religion at large, saying, (*c*) *For, to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not, &c.* The same modes of expression are used by other Writers, and applied to the ordinary occasions of civil Life. Thus says one, (*d*) “ *To will is present, as to saving the Citizens — but the power, and ability to do (it) is wanting.*”

Since therefore the Phrases, *to will, and to do*, are of such general use and application, as that they may be indifferently applied to civil, or to religious affairs ; it is only the subject-matter of the Discourse, that must limit their sense and meaning one way, or another. And I can see nothing in the Context, to confine the sense of this passage to
alms-

(*b*) 2 Cor. viii. 3, 4, 10, 11, 12.

(*c*) Rom. viii. 18, 19.

(*d*) πᾶσι καὶ τὸ θέλει σωζεσθαι κ. τ. λ. ποιεῖν ἀγαθὰ.
DION. HALICARN. Rom. Antiq. Lib. VIII.

olms giving. On the contrary, from the submissive and obedient regards, which are justly due to Christ, in his present high state of Exaltation, as *Lord of all*, described just before, (e) the Apostle naturally infers the indispensable obligation, lying upon all Christians, to apply themselves to the great affair of Religion, with the utmost diligence, care, and concern. This he aptly expresses, by *working out their own Salvation with fear and trembling.* And then, as a proper inciting Motive, to this great and most important work, he subjoins the following cogent reason for it, *For, it is God who worketh in you both to will, and to do, of his good Pleasure (f).*

What I propose is, to *explain* the Nature, and to shew the Force of this Argument; and then proceed to make the proper Use and Application of it, for the purpose intended.

First. I shall endeavour to *explain* the Nature of this Argument. To which end it will be proper to consider distinctly the several Terms of the Proposition, by inquiring into these three Particulars.

I. What we are to understand by these expressions, *to will, and to do.*

Y 2

II. In

(e) Ver. 9, 10, 11.

(f) See HALLET'S Notes and Disc. Vol. I. Page 29.

II. In what respect God may be said, to *work in us* both the one and the other. And,

III. What is implied in his doing it, of his *good Pleasure*.

I. Let us inquire, what we are to understand by these expressions, *to will, and to do*. In the general then, be it observed, *to will*, is to chuse; and *to do*, here, is to practise, what is good. For, it is *a good thing*, a good and a great *work*, the work of Religion and *Salvation*, which the holy Apostle is urging upon Christians in this place. More particularly,

(1.) *To will, and to do*, implies and supposes a *power* to chuse, and to practise what is good. There can be no *willing* of any thing, without a *power* to will it; and there can be no *doing* of any thing, without a *power* to do it. Because, both the willing and the doing of any thing, is the actual *exercise* of some power and faculty, adapted to those several ends and uses respectively. Consequently, in the present case, considering the Nature of our Subject, *to will, and to do*, must imply, and suppose, a power to chuse, and to practise, what is good. But this is not all.

(2.) *To will, and to do*, must include the *real use* and exercise of the said power of volition and action, by actually chusing and practising what is good. Such a power, I
acknow-

acknowledge, may be conceived to subsist in a rational Creature, *without* the proper exercise of it. And so these two things, the *power* itself, and the *exercise* of that power, are very distinguishable, the one from the other. But *really* to will, and to do good, means something more than the bare *faculty* of willing and doing it ; viz. an *exertion* of this faculty, in the actual choice and practice of good. This faculty however, is not always exerted for both purposes at once. For, *to will*, may be *present*, when the *performance* of a good thing is absent and wanting ; as the Apostle hints, in the words cited before. Persons may sometimes *see*, and *approve* the *better*, and yet *follow*, and practise the *worse*. And this is the case, when animal Nature rebels against moral Principles, or the *Law of the Flesh* prevails over the *Law of the Mind* (g). In such a situation, a man may be willing, and inclined, in some measure, to do the good which he does not (h).

Having so considered the proper meaning and import of these terms, *to will*, and *to do*, I proceed to the next head of Inquiry, viz.

II. In what respect, God may be said *to work in us* both the one and the other. According to the distinction before laid down,

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he

(g) Rom. vii. 23.

(h) Ver. 19, 20. Confer. PLUTARC. de Virt. Moral.

he may be understood to *give* us the *power* and faculty of chusing and practising what is good ; and likewise to *excite*, and promote in us, the due *exercise* of this power, by proper ways and means.

(1.) God *gives* us the *power* and faculty of chusing and practising what is good. This faculty, wherever it subsists, must doubtless be the Gift of God, the Author of our rational and moral Beings. And it is a power derived from him to all moral Agents whatsoever, in one *way* and *degree*, or another. For, without such a power, they could not properly be moral Agents at all, or capable Subjects of moral rule and government.

But then, in what *particular way* it pleases God to impart this same power to any of his rational Creatures ; this, I presume, is a matter of little consequence, as to the main ends and purposes of Religion, provided men *acknowledge* it to be his Gift, and are duly sensible of their *obligations* to exert and employ it for his honour and service ; and piously concerned to make the right use and improvement of it (*i*). I have, let it be supposed, a certain quantity or degree of this moral power of Choice and Action, communicated to me, in order to qualify me for the work of Religion ; a power given me either in a natural, or in a supernatural way ; or partly the one, and partly the other. But,
in

(i) Vid, CLEM. Alexand. Strom. Lib. IV,

in whatsoever way it is given me, still it is the Gift of God ; and to say, it is given me in *this* way, or in *that* way, does not alter the case, or make the power itself one jot more or less. The quantity of power is just the same every way ; proceeds from the same hand ; answers the same end ; and it lays me under the very same obligations of Religion. As this moral power of Agency and Election, is the same in itself, it is neither increased, nor diminished by the method of conveyance, or communication. Because the more that is given in *one* way, so much the less is given me in *another* way ; and so it amounts at last to the same thing, and answers all the same purposes of Religion and Morality.

Therefore, waving all nice and needless Speculations upon this head, I leave others to determine, if they can, the particular time *when*, and the precise manner *how*, God gives us the power, in whole, or in part, both to *will*, and to *do*, what is good. This much only I take leave to observe, and insist on ; that such a power is, in an improveable degree, derived from God to all moral Agents and accountable Creatures whatsoever, thro' the whole System of rational intelligent Beings. For, without this power, we should all be quite incapable of moral rule and government, as was hinted before ; because, in that case, we could neither chuse and prac-

use, what was commanded ; nor refuse and forbear, what was forbidden. And thus, all injunctions laid upon us, of any kind, would be insignificant, vain, and useless. Therefore I conclude that, in whatever instant of time we commence accountable Beings, it is *then* that God giveth us the power in a greater, or less degree, both *to will, and to do good*. Because our *capacity* for religious Obedience, and our obligation to perform it, must begin together, and be strictly answerable to each other, in exact proportion.

I said before, that the power *to will, and to do good*, is, in an *improveable degree*, derived from God, to all moral Agents. And so it may be supposed, to be not the very same, at all times ; but it may increase or diminish in particular Persons, according to the use and application they make of it. For, *to him that hath, more shall be given* ; that is, *so hath, as properly to use, what he hath* ; as a man *hath a garment*, when he wears it, by way of distinction from having it in his Wardrobe ; to borrow an illustration from PLATO (*k*). To him, that thus hath, in proper use and exercise, shall be given, and he shall have more *abundance*. But those must expect the contrary, who are *wicked and slothful Servants* ; those who *bide their Talent in a Napkin*, and make no proper use of the rational and moral Powers, which
God

(*k*) THEÆTET,

God hath given them (1). And that he hath really given both them, and all other men, some such Powers of *Choice* and *Action*, manifestly appears, I think, from the foregoing *Reflections*.

Let us now proceed to *Facts*. Some persons evidently discover in themselves, a power both *to will*, and *to do Good*; for, they actually chuse and practise it; but they could do neither without a power to do it. And as they must be possessed of such a power, before they could use it, others also may have the like power, though they do not exert it at present, nor make the proper use of it; but, on the contrary, chuse and practise Evil in the room of Good. And in strictness of speech, does not *chusing* Evil imply and suppose a power of *refusing* it, and of embracing the opposite Good? Otherwise, it could not properly be Choice, but Necessity. For, there can be no room for Choice, where there is no *variety*, or competition in the case, but one single object alone to be embraced.

Perhaps, it will be alledged, that vicious men may be said to chuse Evil, as they are *pleased* with it, and *delight* in it; though not as Evil, but under the mistaken notion of Good.

Well, be it so; then we may infer, that vicious men themselves have a power to
chuse

(1) Matt. xiii. 12. xxv. 29,

chuse Good, though they chuse Evil ; since they chuse Evil, under the notion of Good. Besides, the very Brutes are capable of such a Choice, as hath been specified. For they are *pleased* with their animal gratifications, and yet they are not supposed to be capable of moral Agency, like wicked men. But the truth is, the Choice of Evil, in vicious men, does not formally consist in the pleasure and delight which they take in it. For, that pleasure, is properly the *motive* of their Choice, not their Choice itself, since they chuse Evil, *because* they delight in it. And it is a motive too, which may be resisted, and over-ruled. For men are not necessarily governed, like the inferior Creatures, by mere Instinct. And so they lie under no Necessity of following the blind impulse of their appetites and passions. For, they can *deny themselves* when they please, and often do so for prudential reasons.

There is one thing more, I desire may be well considered, and laid to heart (and every guilty heart will feel the force of what I am now going to say) those persons, who chuse and practise Evil, instead of Good, incur *guilt* thereby, and so, upon reflection, they stand condemned for it, in the impartial judgement of their own minds, and consequently in the righteous judgement of God ; for Conscience is his Vicegerent. But to suppose, that what is *necessary* and unavoidable, should

should be the ground and matter of any mens Condemnation, this certainly is a wrong supposition, contrary to all Reason, and inconsistent with the Wisdom and Rectitude of a moral Administration. Therefore, God hath given a power *to will, and to do* Good, even to those men who make no right use of this power, but, on the contrary, chuse and practise what is Evil. For to suppose otherwise is very *absurd*, to say no worse.

Upon the whole then, it is manifest that God may be said to *work in us both to will, and to do*, as he gives us a power to chuse and to practise what is Good; that is to say, he gives us the faculty of *discerning* between Good and Evil; and of *preferring* the former before the latter in our Choice, and of *acting* agreeably to this preference by a determined practice of Good, and an avoidance of Evil. I shall now conclude this important head of Discourse, in the words of *Sirachides*. (m) “ Say not then, it is through the
 “ Lord that I fell away; for thou oughtest
 “ not to do the things, that he hateth. Say
 “ not thou, he hath caused me to err; for
 “ he hath no need of (a) sinful man. The
 “ Lord hateth all Abomination; and they,
 “ that fear God, love it not. He himself
 “ made Man from the beginning, and left him
 “ in the hand of his own Counsel. If thou
 “ wilt, thou *mayest* keep the Command-
 “ ments,

(m) Ecclus. xv. 11—17.

“ments, and perform acceptable Faithfulness. He hath set Fire and Water before thee; stretch forth thine hand unto whether thou wilt. Before man, is Life and Death; and whether him liketh, shall be given him.” In these vigorous and expressive terms, that ancient *Hebrew* Writer asserts and describes man’s proper Agency, as the subject of God’s moral Government.

I proceed to observe,

(2.) God may also be said to *work in us both to will, and to do*, as he excites and promotes in us the due *exercise* of this power, by proper ways and means. It is possible, that the moral power of Choice and Action, before described, may lie dormant in the Soul for a time, and the use of it be suspended, for a shorter or longer term, before it is properly exerted. For, a person may have this power, and yet make no right use of it, for the practical ends and purposes of Religion.

In this case, we may receive great benefit and assistance, from those ways and means, which divine wisdom and goodness shall make use of; in order to *awaken* and rouse our sleeping powers, into proper exercise and action, according to the language of the Apostle, (n) *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the Dead, and Christ shall give thee light.* All secure sinners are, as it were asleep, and spiritually dead. (For Death is a kind of Sleep.)

(n) Eph. v. 14.

Sleep.) They are *dead in sin* (o) ; but after their repentance and reformation, they become *dead to sin* (p). Both which Scripture expressions are equally strong, and therefore in all reason ought to be interpreted the same way ; that is, not as importing an absolute want of *power* to do Good in the one case, or to do Evil in the other ; but only denoting a *suspension*, and non-exercise of that power in both cases respectively. Thus, habitual sinners, in fact, make no more use of their moral powers for religious purposes, than if they had no such powers at all ; just like persons asleep, having all their powers of action not absolutely *lost*, but only suspended for the time. Therefore, under these circumstances, exciting means must be very useful and proper to call forth the sluggish dormant principle, into due exercise and action.

Divine ways and means of this kind, must be of special use and service, where persons have contracted a strong habit of spiritual Indolence and Inactivity ; when by long custom in sin, the moral powers of the Soul are so perverted and depraved, as that the moral sense, and the power of self-government, is greatly weakned and impaired. In this unhappy case, it must be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for men to *recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil*, and to break the strong charm of their enchanting lusts
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(o) Eph. ii. 1.

(p) Rom. vi. 2, 11.

(so bewitching are the pleasures of sin) without some extraordinary aid and assistance, to *help them in such a time of extreme need*. For, as says the Prophet, *(q) Can the Æthiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? Then may ye also do Good, that are accustomed to do Evil*. However, all things are possible with God. And as his Wisdom always proportions the means to the end, so the methods which he takes to carry on the work of Religion in our Souls, must be reasonably *sufficient*, whether they prove *effectual* or not, for that blessed purpose.

In relation to the *nature* of these means, the divine aids and co-operations may be distinguished into two kinds, namely, *internal* and *external*.

To begin with the former. There may be a *preventing Grace*, which, by secret impressions made upon our minds, disposeth us to call upon God devoutly. And for the due encouragement of our Prayers, we are positively assured, that our *heavenly Father will give the holy Spirit to them that ask him (r)*. And *seeing that we have a great High-Priest, that is passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God*, in his Name we may *come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in time of need (s)*. If any persons reject the notion of supernatural

(q) Jer. xiii. 23.

(r) Luke xi. 13.

(s) Heb. iv. 14—16.

tural influences of the Spirit, under a pretence that it destroys man's proper Agency, it is no such notion of divine influences that we maintain ; but only such a divine Concurrence, as operates upon the human Mind, in a way suitable to our rational natures, as moral Agents. And if the power of *Nature* in *their* Scheme, be equal to the power of *Grace* in *ours*, Man's proper Agency seems to be as well secured upon *our* hypothesis, as it is upon *their own*.—Besides, we should entertain no hypothesis that would destroy the necessity of *Prayer*, which is a natural Duty. For, these three things lie at the foundation of Religion, viz. a belief in the *Being* and *Providence* of God ; a conviction of our *Dependence* upon him for all things ; and a capacity in us, to *own* and acknowledge this Dependence, by rational and solemn acts of Devotion. From whence arises the Duty, and moral Obligation of Prayer, as a fit expression, and a proper testification of our Dependence on the divine Being.

But besides the *internal aids* of the holy Spirit, divine Wisdom makes use of *external means* also, in carrying on the work of Religion in the Souls of men. Particularly, the *works* and the *word* of God, divine *providences* and *ordinances*, are of signal use and service this way ; by declaring or enforcing the great *principles*, essential *duties*, and *weighty motives* of Religion, in the most efficacious

ficacious manner. More especially, the Gospel of Christ supplies us with rich advantages of this nature. For the *divine power hath given us all things, which appertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him, who hath called us to Glory and Virtue (t)*. With an eye to which excellent dispensation of divine *Grace and Truth, which came by Jesus Christ (u)*, it was foretold by the royal Prophet, *(x) Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*. A remarkable Prophecy; importing, that as the Kingdom of Christ should be of a *spiritual nature*, so the obedient subjects of his holy Kingdom, would be made such, not by methods of violence and compulsion, but by proper means of conviction and persuasion.

The sum then, of what hath been offered, is this. As God giveth us the *faculty* both to *chuse* and to *practise* what is Good; so he excites, and promotes in us, the due *exercise* of this faculty, by proper ways and means. And thus he may be said to give us *both to will, and to do, of his good Pleasure*. It remains to be considered,

III. What is implied in this last expression, viz. his doing it *of his good Pleasure*. There would, perhaps, have been little or no occasion for this inquiry, if some persons
were

(t) 2 Pet. i. 3.

(x) Psal. cx. 3.

(u) John i. 17.

were not too prone to judge of God by themselves, and make their own capricious temper the rule and standard of divine Rectitude and Benevolence. Such mere *humourists* are some people, that they will be pleased and displeased with any thing, or nothing, just as it suits their present fickle fancy, without any regard at all to the Nature and Reason of things. And so, judging of Deity by themselves, they are apt to entertain a strange phantastical notion of the divine temper and conduct, as if God were altogether such an one as they are; that is to say, pleased with some things, without any cause, but his own arbitrary Will, and with as little Reason displeased with others.

But surely, what is a weakness in men, can be no excellency or perfection in God, whose Goodness and Benignity is not a fickle fit, or flow of good Humour, but a fixed, steady, uniform principle of kind and generous action. And thus the *good Pleasure* of God, is not a partial weak Fondness, but a wise, rational, disinterested Benevolence. Therefore, when the Apostle says here in the Text, *It is God that worketh in you, both to will, and to do, of his good Pleasure*, his words may be understood to imply the following Particulars.

(1.) He does it out of his *Benevolence* and good Will. It proceeds from the essential

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Goodness

Goodness and Benignity of the divine Nature, that we are made rational Creatures, and moral Agents; and that we are also favoured with so many means of religious improvements, as Men, and as Christians. All these advantages flow from the *good Pleasure* of God; that is, the *good Pleasure of his Goodness*; as the same thing is expressed in another place (x).

(2.) God is pleased with his own *Act* in this work. As all that he does for us, in the great work of our Salvation, is the fruit and effect of his Love and Goodness, so the Deity takes a pleasure in the indulging of his kind propensions towards us, by doing all that is fit and proper on his part, for advancing and promoting our moral perfection and happiness. This, my Brethren, is the good Pleasure of God; this is what he loves, what he delights in; to make us all holy here, and for ever happy hereafter. And so in proportion, as this blessed work succeeds, the *Pleasure of the Lord* is said to *prosper* (y). On the other hand, (z) *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way and live.*

(3.) God acts, in this case, with sovereign Wisdom, dispensing his free and gratuitous favours

(x) 2 Thess. i. 11.

(y) Isa. liii. 10.

(z) Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

favours with such variety, as seemeth good in his sight. To one Servant he giveth *five Talents* ; to another *two* ; and to another *one* ; to every man according to his several ability ; with this general injunction laid upon all, *Occupy till I come (a)*. Thus, as there is a future *Day of Reckoning*, so there is a present *Day of Grace*, appointed for every man ; and this is limited to a certain time, as divine Wisdom sees proper. For the Spirit of God *will not always strive with man (b)*. And I am afraid, that the same lamentation, which a weeping Saviour once made over a sinful City, may be justly made again at last over many a sinful Soul. (c) *If (or oh, that) thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy Peace ; but now they are hid from thine eyes.* Therefore, it highly concerns us all, after the example of our blessed Saviour, *to work the work of him that sent us into the World, while it is day ; because the night cometh, when no man can work (d)*. And this most certainly is one good reason, why we should *work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling*. Which introduces the next general head of Discourse.

Having then largely considered, and endeavoured to explain the *Nature* of the Apo-

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stle's

(a) Matt. xxv. 15. Luke xix. 13.

(b) Gen. vi. 3. (c) Luke xix. 41, 42.

(d) John ix. 4.

Ale's Argument in the Text, I proceed now more briefly,

Secondly. To shew the *Force* of this Argument, for the intended purpose of persuading Christians to *work out their own Salvation with fear and trembling.* To which end let it be observed,

I. We cannot want *sufficient* power and aid in the work of our Salvation, considering what hand God himself hath in this great work. For, *to will, and to do*, that is, to chuse and to practise what is right and good, is all that is necessary in this case; and, as hath been shewn, God giveth us proper helps and abilities for both. Remember, *it is God*, (or he is God) the all-sufficient God, *who worketh in you*, &c. And as he does it of his *good Will* and *Pleasure*, the same free Grace and Goodness, which disposes him to give us *any* degree, will not fail to afford us a *proper* degree of power and assistance, to answer all the important ends and purposes of Religion and Salvation. Now, what must be the natural and just consequence of this?—But that,

II. Those persons, who finally miscarry in the work of their Salvation, must be left for ever, without all excuse. The guilt must lie at their own door, and they can have none to blame for the faulty and fatal miscarriage, but themselves alone. Therefore,

III. The

III. The proper Inference and Conclusion from the whole, is this, that Christians lie under an indispensable obligation, to work out their own Salvation ; as the Apostle exhorts them to do.

The practical *Use* and *Improvement*, which I am now to make of his Argument, is to press home upon your hearts and consciences, his own Exhortation. Consider then, my fellow Christians, that the Salvation of your Souls, is a matter of the last moment to yourselves. *(e)* *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul ? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his Soul ?* But God hath committed to every man the care of his own Soul, in an humble and pious dependence on himself. Thus, an affair of the greatest importance is now depending ; depending upon your own conduct and behaviour in this present Life, which is only a state of trial and preparation for a coming World. That other World is daily and hourly approaching nearer, to every one of us, and the state of our final Recompence, and everlasting Retribution, hastening on apace. Many persons are continually passing from *this* World to *that* World, and exchanging Time for Eternity. Their sun is gon down ; their character sealed ; their condition fixed and determined for ever ! Seeing these things are so, oh, *what manner*

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of

(e) Mark viii. 36, 37.

of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness ! With what holy care and concern, with what fear and trembling, ought you to work out your own eternal Salvation !

In order to which end, let me here add a few hints, by way of *Direction*.

(1.) Labour after a firm and vigorous belief in the great Principles of the Gospel. If any ask, *What must we do, that we might work the works of God ?* The answer is, *This is the work of God, that ye believe in him, whom he hath sent (f).* This is the first and leading step in Religion to every Christian (presupposing God's Existence and moral Providence) that he believe in the *Lord Jesus Christ*, as the *Son of God*, and the *Saviour of the World*.

(2.) Diligently apply yourselves to the faithful discharge of all the duties of Christianity ; having laid the foundation deep in a true Repentance, proportioned to the nature of your crimes. *For, what doth it profit, my Brethren, though a man say, he hath Faith, and hath no works ? Can Faith save him (g) ? Can such a Faith save him ?* A Faith, which hath no practical influence upon his moral temper and conduct, to mend his heart and life ? What, can such a Faith as this, how sound and orthodox soever it be, save any man or woman ? Impossible. The unchangeable Nature and Reason of things forbids it.

No ;

(f) John vi. 28, 29.

(g) Jam. ii. 14.

No; nothing will avail in Christ Jesus, but a new Creature (b). And what is a new Creature? But a penitent reformed Sinner, whose Faith worketh by love, and keeping the Commandments of God (i).

(3.) Stedfastly persevere in the service of God to the end. For, *he that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved (k)*. The great Duty of Perseverance, may be the thing more directly intended in the words of the Text. For, having commended the *Philippians*, for their former diligence and fidelity, the Apostle seems here to exhort them to go on, as they had begun, and so *work out their own Salvation* thoroughly, *with fear and trembling*; trembling for fear of miscarriage in this important affair at last, through a backsliding heart. For, if any man draw back, he draws *back to Perdition*, instead of believing to *the Salvation of his Soul (l)*.

(4.) Let me give you one word of *caution*. Do not indulge a gloomy dread and terror of mind, but a wise, rational, and serious concern, to approve yourselves to God, through the whole of your behaviour. For the *fear and trembling*, which the Apostle recommends, does not consist in any violent agitations of the Body, or distractions of the Soul. A calm, sedate, composed, though solemn, and awful frame of Spirit, is the best for re-

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(b) Gal. vi. 15.

(i) Chap. v. 6. 1 Cor. vii. 19.

(k) Matt. x. 22.

(1) Heb. x. 38, 39.

ligious Purposes. The Intellect is then clear ; the light of Faith shines upon the heart, through an undisturbed medium ; and so displays the grand objects of Religion, in all their native dignity, lustre, and glory. But that terrifying dread and horror, which unhinges and confounds the mind, is as unserviceable in the Christian Life, as it is unsuitable to the Christian Dispensation. Therefore be upon your guard against the sad Gloom of Superstition, whilst you piously cultivate a serious Spirit of Devotion. *For, God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (m). Now, the God of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the holy Ghost. Amen.*

(m) 2 Tim. i. 7.





DISCOURSE XV.

On the Nature of Christ's Kingdom.



JOHN xviii. 36.

Jesus answered, my Kingdom is not of this World.

***** T follows, *If my Kingdom were*

 I ***** *of this World, then would my Ser-*
 ***** *vants fight (or then would my*
 ***** *Servants have fought, that is, by*
 my order, which yet I forbade them to do,
 when one of them drew his sword in my de-
 fence) *that I should not be delivered to the*
Jews : but now is my Kingdom not from hence.
Pilate therefore said unto him, art thou a King
then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am
a King. (or, thou sayest it; for a King am I.)
To this end was I born, and for this cause
came I into the World, that I should bear wit-
ness to the Truth. Every one, that is of the
Truth, heareth my Voice.—I have given this
 whole paragraph, in order for your having a
 clear

clear and succinct view of the Nature of Christ's Kingdom, in his own words; when he was giving an account of himself before *Pontius Pilate*, the Roman Governour, in answer to the charge brought against him by the *Jews*, who falsely pretended, that Jesus was aiming to set up a temporal Kingdom in opposition to *Cæsar*.

The ground of their mistake seems to lie here; that our Saviour professed himself to be the promised and long expected Messiah, whom the *Jews*, in his time, supposed was to be a temporal Prince. And so, from their own mistaken notions, compared with his pretensions, they concluded, that Christ must aim at a temporal Kingdom; although he utterly disclaimed every thing of that kind, and his doing so, was the very thing which made him obnoxious to the body of the Jewish Nation.

For, had he really pretended to be an earthly Monarch, and to erect a Kingdom of this World, the Jews would have gladly embraced him. So that nothing could be more absurd, or inconsistent in them, than to bring such a charge against him; which had it been true, would have most effectually recommended him to their esteem and acceptance.

From the account here laid down, it is obvious to remark, that—*Our Lord Jesus Christ is a King of Truth*; and consequently,
his

his *Kingdom is not of this World*. *Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this World*. And when *Pilate* asked him there upon, *Art thou a King then?* (as his words implied) our Saviour confessed it. But then to show, what sort of King he was, he farther added — *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the World, that I should bear witness to the Truth. Every one, that is of the Truth, beareth my Voice*. As much as to say — “All the friends and lovers of Truth, are the Subjects of my Kingdom, and I do not trouble them, or myself, at all with *politicks*, with secular power, or worldly dominion.” — Thus, there is a plain contrast, or antithesis, between the Kingdom of Christ, as an Advocate for Truth, and a Kingdom of this World. It must therefore be a just Observation, from his own Discourse, that, “Christ, as I said before, is a King of Truth, and consequently, his Kingdom is not of this World.”

In order to set this matter in a farther light, I propose,

I. To premise a few Remarks concerning the *Empire of Truth* in the World.

II. To shew, that Christ is at the Head of this Empire, and so a King of Truth.

And conclude with some proper Inferences from the Subject.

I. I shall

I. I shall premise a few Remarks concerning the *Empire of Truth* in the World. — Truth, in it's abstract notion, is properly the conformity of our ideas to the nature of things. And this general answer may serve, at present, should any one be disposed to ask, what is Truth? A question which *Pilate* proposed to Christ; but, as some say, “ he “ had not patience to stay for an answer;” whereas, the question, as he asked it, did not require any answer at all. For, when he said, *What is Truth?* He spoke with a view to the matter of the charge brought against our Saviour by the Jews. And so, his meaning was evidently this, “ What is Truth “ to the business in hand; or to the matter “ of thy Accusation? If Truth be all thou “ professest, there can be no Harm in that, “ much less Treason in it against *Cæsar*; and “ therefore I pronounce thee innocent of the “ Charge brought against thee.” That this is the true meaning of *Pilate's* question, manifestly appears from what immediately follows, viz. that *when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all* (a).

When I speak of *Truth*, I chiefly confine my thoughts to the region of Truth, as it lieth within the sphere of this World, and is connected with the present state of mankind; without ranging far into *ideal Worlds*, or over the

the Philosophers *field of Truth*, in a higher Orb. And here, the following Observations may be of use and service, to give you some notion and idea of the *Empire of Truth*.

1. It is an Empire *over minds*. For, Truth is the proper object of the Understanding; and the Understanding is the leading faculty in *man*, as well as in all other intelligent Beings; a faculty, without which, the finest instincts and sensations would only form a kind of animal nature, governed by blind impulse, and undirected by the light of Reason, or the law of Truth. Therefore, the nature of Truth discovers, that it's Empire extends over rational intelligent minds, which are qualified to receive it, and the capable subjects of it. And thus, it is a Kingdom *within men* (b). *Truth in the inward parts* (c). Therefore, the scene of this government lies beyond the sphere of human authority. Because, no civil Magistrate can take cognizance of the heart. He may command the Bodies of men, but not their Souls.

2. This Empire of Truth, is founded *in religious and moral Truth*. The very notion and idea of such an Empire, implies a kind of *sovereignty* in Truth, claiming our homage and obedience. Now, nothing but religious and moral Truth can have such a commanding awe and authority over our minds, or lay an obligation upon conscience to

(b) Luke xvii. 21.

(c) Psal. li. 6.

regard it's dictates. Therefore, though all Truth is the object of the Understanding, and forces assent upon proper evidence, yet, properly speaking, a *Kingdom* of Truth can only be founded in religious and moral Truth.—This kind of Truth, which discovers the moral Nature and Reason of things, which leads up the mind to God, the fountain of Truth and Being, and thence descends thro' the various relations, in which his creatures stand to him and to each other; pointing out the obligations that result from thence, upon all moral Agents respectively, through the whole system of intelligent Beings: I say, this kind of Truth, is a sovereign thing.—It is royal Truth, and carries authority with it. Secretly, but forcibly, it establisheth it's own dominion in the Soul, and makes every man a standing law to himself, by the wise frame and constitution of human Nature, suitably adapted to admit the light and the *influence* of sacred Truth, in every way and method of discovery and application.

Thus, by the sovereign force of Truth upon the human heart, we may feel ourselves strongly urged, and inwardly *pressed* in spirit, with a conscious sense of duty to God and man; nor is it in our power to resist, and much less erase, the deep impression, without offering a sort of violence to ourselves, and causing, as it were, a mutiny, or a kind of civil war, in our own breast. For, if the
flesh

flesh lusteth against the spirit, the spirit also lusteth against the flesh; and these things are contrary, the one to the other; so that you cannot do the things that ye would, without all check or controul (d). The law in the Mind, and the law in the Body, mutually war against one another (e). Therefore, as you cannot be good without some opposition from within, so neither can you be bad without a like restraint, while you delight in the Law of God, after the inward man (f). And whence doth this delight proceed? But from the perfect harmony and agreement there is, between the frame of your minds, and the Law of Truth, and from the powerful influence of the latter upon the former.—Thus, the Empire of Truth is founded in religious and moral Truth; nor can any other kind of Truth affect our minds in the same manner, so as either to please or to awe the Soul of man in the same way. Because the moral sense here comes in aid of Truth, to give it the greater force upon the human heart.

3. *The Subjects in this Empire of Truth are perfectly free.*

The very notion of a Kingdom implies and supposes a number of Subjects, who yield obedience to it's laws and constitutions. And so, in the Kingdom of Truth, there are those that

(d) Gal. v. 17.

(f) Rom. vii. 22.

(e) Rom. vii. 23.

that pay allegiance, and a loyal regard to the authority of Truth, by the practice of religious Virtue; to enforce which, is the proper tendency and design of all religious and moral Truth. Hence it is, that our blessed Saviour prayed for his Disciples, that they might be *sanctified through the Truth* (g). The Apostle *Peter* also intimates, (h) that the Souls of men are *purified by obeying the Truth*. —Therefore, subjection and obedience to the Truth, must be expressed by the practice of real Religion, in it's whole compass and extent.

This will answer the proper end of Truth. And so the Empire of Truth will more or less flourish, in proportion to mens advancement in true Piety and Virtue.—It must be acknowledged and lamented, that too many persons *hold the Truth in Unrighteousness* (i). But, if these men are *properly* Subjects, they are only *disloyal*, disaffected, and rebellious Subjects in the Kingdom of Truth. They are those, *that rebel against the Light, and resist the Truth*; causing dreadful convulsions and confusions in the moral World, but especially within their own breasts, as they revolt against the inward sense and reason of their own mind. Such unhappy creatures are at variance with themselves; they have Souls full of tumult, sedition, and discord, and
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(g) John xvii. 17.

(h) 1 Pet. i. 22.

(i) Rom. i. 18.

which can enjoy no peace or tranquility; while they *obey* not the *Truth*, but *obey Unrighteousness* (*k*). — And indeed, so long as they disobey the former, they will of course be submissive slaves to the latter. But, on the other hand, a dutiful regard to the *royal Law* of Truth, will be attended with the practice of universal Righteousness, and with all the happy fruits and effects resulting from it. For, the *Kingdom of God is Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the holy Ghost* (*l*).

To come to the point in view. If the authority of Truth may be either obeyed, or disobeyed, if men may hold the Truth in Unrighteousness, or reduce it to the practice of Righteousness, as different persons in fact do; then the Subjects in the Kingdom of Truth, are *perfectly free*, as I observed before. For, they are not forced, or constrained, to be either virtuous or vicious; but left to their liberty, to chuse either character, as they please, at present, and, as they will answer for hereafter, both to God, and to themselves. — It is indeed manifest from the reason of the thing, that all proper obedience to Truth, must be voluntary, free, and unforced; because the nature of Truth is such, as that, by informing the Mind, it persuades the Will, and so excites and engages to suitable action. — Great is Truth, and will prevail! But how, and by what means? Not

(*k*) Rom. ii. 8.

(*l*) Rom. xiv. 17.

by methods of outward Violence and Compulsion, but in the way of inward Conviction and Persuasion. Accordingly, it was foretold, with a view to the spiritual administration of Christ, that the Subjects of his Kingdom should be *willing in the day of his Power* (m).—Therefore, the Subjects in this Empire of Truth, are perfectly free. For indeed, the Truth itself makes them free, and imparts to them the most desirable Liberty (n).

4. This Empire, or Kingdom of Truth, is the *Kingdom of God*. For, as one says, “God is Truth, in a sense more than figurative; all eternal Truths being necessary Emanations from the infinite Mind. To act conformably therefore to Truth, is to glorify the God of Truth (o).” The divine Being is the immediate *Object* of religious Truth, and the divine Nature the proper *standard* of moral Excellency and Perfection.—Moreover, God is the original *Author* of Truth, to all created Minds; the Father of lights, diffusing the rays of eternal Light, through the whole intelligent World. *There is a spirit in Man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding* (p). As we are endued with a natural capacity for acquiring Truth, so we are furnished with those means of discovering it, which lay us under

(m) Psal. cx. 3.

(n) John viii. 32.

(o) BALGUEY'S Letter to a Deist. Page 68.

(p) Job xxxii. 8.

under a moral Obligation, not only to pursue it, but also to receive it upon proper evidence, and to act conformably unto it. And thus it is God that has established the Authority of Truth, in *our* own Souls, and given it a binding force upon *our* Consciences. So the Conscience is truly his Vicegerent, dictating to every Man, like a divine Oracle in our breast, what *God* would have us to do, in all cases, where moral Truth and Virtue are concerned.—In a word, as God is the eternal *Source*, the immediate *Object*, and the original *Author* of Truth, imparted to his intelligent Creatures, so he may be conceived to be the *ultimate end* of Truth, in the rational and moral World. And thus, the Empire of Truth, is the Kingdom of God, being erected for his glory, and designed to promote his honour, in the perfection and happiness of his Creatures, which reflects the brightest glory upon his Name.—I need not add, that this divine Kingdom is advanced by *divine Methods* alone, and so in this respect differs from the Kingdoms of the World. For, thus much has been already suggested; and the sentiment will receive some further light and illustration from the next general head of Discourse, to which I now proceed.

II. I am to shew, that Christ is *at the head* of this Empire, and so a King of Truth. With this view let me observe,

1. Considered as the divine *Logos*, or Word, the only Son, and Issue of the eternal Father, Christ may be looked upon, as the *prime Medium* of all divine Communications, and so the original Dispenser of Light and Truth to the World. *For, no man knoweth the Son, but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him (q).* The Son of God is *the Brightness* (the refulgence, or the bright effulgence) of *his Father's glory, and the express image* (or character) of *his Person (r).* *This is the true Light, which lighteth every man, that cometh into the World (s) ;* irradiating the minds of Men, with a beam of sacred Light, issuing forth from the eternal Source and Fountain of Truth.

2. Christ is at the *head* of this Empire, by the *Constitution* and *Appointment* of God the Father. He was a Teacher come from God, as he made it evidently appear by the divine Miracles which he performed (*t*). — And, according to the Doctrine which he taught, he is the anointed Lord and Saviour of the World ; highly exalted *above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion ;* having *all power given to him in Heaven and in Earth,* and being made *head over all things to his Church (u).*

3. Christ did *openly* assert and maintain
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(q) Matt. xi. 27. (r) Heb. i. 3. (s) John i. 9.
(t) John iii. 2. (u) Matt. xxviii. 18. Eph. i. 21, 22.

the *cause of Truth*, and promote it's interest in the World, by the most proper ways and methods. He came a Light into the World, a dark World, which wanted such Light; and he did enlighten it by his *heavenly Doctrine*. All those *principles* of Truth, upon which the duties of mankind are founded; the *duties* resulting from those principles, in the whole compass and extent of religious Virtue; the proper *motives* and arguments to enforce the practice of those duties; in a word, all practical Truth, which we are concerned to know and receive as Men, and as Christians, is implicitly or expressly contained in the Doctrine of Christ.—Again; he enlightened the World by his *holy Example*. For, he practised himself the excellent lesson which he taught his Disciples. (x) *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in Heaven.* But further, to recommend the cause, and establish the authority of Truth in the Earth, our blessed Saviour confirmed it by his Miracles, sealed it with his Death, gave additional evidence to it by his Resurrection; and last of all, to spread the Empire of Truth through all Nations, and through all Ages, he sent down the *Spirit of Truth* upon his Apostles, to guide them into all Truth; and thereby qualify them to lead others into it, by their *Preaching* to that Age,

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and

(x) Matt. v. 16.

and by their *inspired Writings*, in all future Ages. Now, in consequence of these things, I add,

4. Christ *did actually establish an Empire of Truth* in the World, as the Event has declared. This Empire had, indeed, some being in the World, before the Gospel period commenced; but it was of a very narrow extent; the cause of Truth and Virtue being fallen into great decay, and reduced to a very low ebb. Therefore, Christ came to assert the sacred Rights of Truth, and to make reprisals upon the Kingdom of darkness, by reclaiming and recovering mankind from the common Apostacy. Accordingly, so he did, by turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.—It is true; he made use of others, as his instruments, in this grand Revolution; but Christ himself was at the head of the Embassy, and the whole affair was conducted under his direction and superior administration. *Now then*, says the Apostle, *(y) we are Ambassadors for Christ* (in his room, and by his substitution) *as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* And what was the result of this grand negotiation? But the universal prevalency, victory, and triumph of Gospel Truth, over all opposition, from every quarter. *Casting down imaginations, and every high thing, which ex-*
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(y) 2 Cor. v. 20.

alteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (z). That is to say, captivating the Souls of men, not enslaving their Bodies. Such were the triumphs of Truth in the World, upon the universal promulgation of the Gospel. And let me observe, this same Gospel, as it is transmitted down to us in the sacred Writings, contains a perfect System of divine Truth, which is still the blessed engine and armour of Light, to combat the powers and the works of Darkness, and to support the moral government of God among men, from Age to Age, under the perpetual administration of Christ, to the end of the World.

Upon the whole then, it is manifest,

1. The Kingdom of Christ is *not of this World*. So he has expressly declared in the Text, in contradistinction to the Kingdom of Truth which he avowed. And this conclusion naturally follows from the account given before of the nature of his Kingdom. For, the Kingdoms of this World, are framed and calculated for quite different ends and purposes. They are designed to serve the *interests* of this World, by guarding mens persons, and temporal properties from force and external violence. But, what is Truth? Truth hath another province; that is, to inform mens minds, and govern their hearts, and

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by

(z) 2 Cor. x. 5.

by advancing the proper perfection of their Natures, promote the true happiness of rational Beings. Thus, the Kingdom of God and Christ, is Truth and Virtue, Reason and Religion, Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the holy Ghost. And who can be so blind, as not to see, that a Kingdom of such a sublime and spiritual Nature, is a very different thing from the Kingdoms of this World? Now, in consequence of this, I further observe,

2. The Kingdom of Christ no ways *interferes* with the Kingdoms of this World. And therefore the Princes of the World have nothing to fear from it, as any ways prejudicial to their interest. *I find in him no fault at all*, said *Pilate* (a), concerning our blessed Saviour, when he understood that Christ was only a Prince and Patron of Truth. He thought the State to be very safe, and secure from any danger in this case; although it doth not appear, that Christ and *Pilate* had concerted any formal *Alliance between the Church and State*, for the mutual security of both.

3. The Kingdom of Christ can be only administered in a *spiritual manner*. Because, this method of administration alone is suitable to the nature and design of his Kingdom. *If my Kingdom were of this World, then would my Servants fight*, says Christ (b). But, since it

(a) Ver. 38.

(b) Ver. 36.

it is not of this World, his Servants must use no carnal weapons, or methods of Violence, but only the *Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*, to promote the interest of Christ in the World. *The Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient. In Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledgement of the Truth*(c). Therefore, the Servants, or Ministers of Christ, are invested only with spiritual powers, which they derive from *him*, not from the civil Magistrate; and which therefore they may exercise independently on the latter, as well as with interfering with him at all. Nor can the Magistrate properly give the Ministers of Christ any *more* power in religious matters, than what they have already received from him, by virtue of their holy and sacred Office. An Office designed, not to serve any secular purposes, but to promote the spiritual ends of Religion. And these ends can be promoted by spiritual ways and means alone, by proper methods of instruction, conviction, and persuasion.

4. Since Christ is a King of Truth, we learn from hence, the *high value and regard which is due to sacred Truth*.—Truth, religious and moral Truth, must needs be a most valuable thing in itself, since the Son
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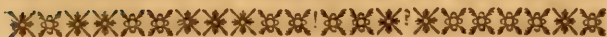
(c) 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

of God came on purpose from Heaven, to spread the Empire and Influence of Truth here upon Earth. — We should therefore highly esteem it, and express our esteem of it in every proper way; particularly, by a public *profession* of the Gospel, we should bear our testimony to the Truth, after the example of Christ, who was born for this end, and for this cause came into the World, that he might bear Witness to the Truth. — But if we should openly *profess* the Truth, we ought certainly to express our regard for it also, by making our *practice* agree with our profession. Is Christ a King of Truth? And can it be allowable in any of us to live in opposition to him and it? By no means; especially when we consider, that Christ *sealed* the Truth with *his most precious Blood*, and at the same time, in the very same act, gave us the strongest proof imaginable of his great love and affection for us, by dying for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Let us all then, with God's assistance, approve ourselves the friends of Truth, by *hearing his Voice*, and living in subjection to the laws of his holy and heavenly Kingdom; remembering, that Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from Sin and Misery.



DISCOURSE XVI.

On receiving the Word.



JAMES i. 21.

Wherefore lay apart all Filthiness, and Superfluity of Naughtiness, and receive with Meekness the ingrafted Word, which is able to save your Souls.

IN the begining of this Chapter, the Apostle directs persons to a right conduct and behaviour under their peculiar Temptations, or Trials and Afflictions.—In the next place, he giveth them a seasonable caution, against putting a wrong construction upon the Dispensations of God's Providence, by making him the Author of Sin. And in order to make it appear, that God neither *is*, nor *can* be, the Author of Evil; he shews, on the contrary, that God is unchangeably the Author of all Good (a). As a further proof of the point, the

(a) Ver. 17.

the Apostle observeth, that it is the proper work of God, his chosen and delightful work, to make men good and holy, saying, *(b) Of his own Will begat he us with the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his Creatures ; that is, sacred to God, and dedicated to his honour and service, like the first-fruits under the Law.* He then subjoins a proper rule to be observed by Christians, in respect to the manner of *entertaining* the Word, in order to it's having a good effect upon them. *(c) Wherefore, my beloved Brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.* q. d. " Let every man
 " be ready upon all proper occasions, to hear
 " the Word of God with chearfulness and
 " alacrity. But, let him be very backward
 " to gainsay it, by any rash censures ; and
 " beware of taking offence at it, if it hap-
 " pen to contradict his carnal prejudices, and
 " corrupt affections." *For, (as it follows)*
(d) the Wrath of man (in any case, much
more in this) worketh not the Righteousness of
God. " It maketh us no better men in our-
 " selves, nor more acceptable to him, but
 " quite the reverse."—Upon this the Apo-
 stle repeats, and further explains his exhor-
 tation to a right manner of receiving the
 Word. *(e) Wherefore lay apart all Filthiness,*
and Superfluity of Naughtiness, and receive
 with

(b) Ver. 18.

(c) Ver. 19.

(d) Ver. 20.

(e) Ver. 21.

with Meekness the ingrafted Word, which is able to save your Souls.

In which Words, the Apostle seems to keep in view, what he had said just before, concerning the *first-fruits of his Creatures*; the first-fruits of Trees, as well as other kinds of produce, being dedicated to the service of God under the Law (*f*). The manner of expression here, manifestly alludes to the ingrafting of a Tree, into a *clean* stock, with all the superfluous branches lopped off, and pruned away. An ancient Author expresseth himself in similar language, when he saith, (*g*) “ Taking away with sharp knives, every “ thing that is *filthy* and *superfluous*.” Here you see, we have the Apostle’s *Filthiness* and *Superfluity*; but when he adds of *Naughtiness*, this explains the figure, applying it to a spiritual or moral sense. Therefore, the general meaning of his Words is evidently *this*. “ In order to make us fruitful in Religion, we must divest ourselves of all carnal Prejudices and Passions, and receive the Word of Truth with a teachable disposition.” And good reason there is for it, because the Word of God thus received, and deeply ingrafted in our hearts, is *able to save our Souls*; by making us fruitful, and so prevent-

(*f*) See Levit. xix. 24. Nehem. x. 35.

(*g*) ὀξύτατοις δρεπάνοις πᾶν τὸ φαῦλον καὶ περίτλον ἐξαίρου-
τας. GEORONIC. Lib. x. Cap. 77.

preventing our being *cut down, and cast into the fire* of destruction.

In order to give some further light into this Subject, I propose,

I. To explain the *Duty* here enjoined upon Christians, in reference to *God's Word*.

II. To consider the *Argument* or *Motive* suggested by the Apostle, in order to enforce this *Duty*.

And then apply the whole in some practical Reflections.

I. I shall endeavour to explain the *Duty* here enjoined upon Christians, in reference to *God's Word*. This *Duty* is expressed and described, by "Laying aside all Filthiness, " and Superfluity of Naughtiness, and receiving with Meekness the ingrafted Word." Now, for the clearer and more distinct Illustration of the matter, I shall enquire into three things:

(1.) *What* it is, which we are required to receive, viz. the *ingrafted Word*.

(2.) What is implied in *receiving it*. And,

(3.) With what *preparation*, and in what *manner* it is to be received. We must lay apart all *Filthiness, and Superfluity of Naughtiness*, and receive the Word with *Meekness*.

(1.) Let us consider, *what* it is which we are required to receive. And, it is the *ingrafted Word*. An emphatical term used by the

the Apostle in this place, to express the Doctrine of the Gospel, which a little before is called the *Word of Truth*.—*This* then is the thing, which we are to receive. And truly the Gospel of Christ, is a thing so excellent in itself, and so very useful to us, in it's blessed tendency and design, as to be worthy of all acceptation. It is a Present fit for God to make, and for Man to receive. It is Christ's Legacy to the World, and the great Treasure of his Church. Indeed, the Gospel is not such a Treasure, as worldly-minded men chiefly covet. Their low and groveling minds are wholly intent upon other matters, and the warm desires of their Souls center on a different sort of objects. If Jesus Christ had offered them a large Sum of Money, or a good Estate, or some great Preferment in the World; such an offer as *this*, would have been far more welcome and acceptable to such persons, than all the blessings of the everlasting Gospel.

Is it not possible, that some persons, here present, would be more attentive to my Discourse, than otherwise they are likely to be, if I were now going to make some proposal to them of that kind, and undertook to shew them an infallible way to be rich and great in the World?—But, all worldly views and affections, prejudices and prepossessions, apart; let us all prevail with ourselves, for once, to lay apart all Filthiness, and Superfluity

fluity of Naughtiness, and receive with Meekness what may be offered upon the Subject in hand. And I hope to make it appear, before I have done, that the Gospel of Christ, is very well worth any Man's acceptance, and the richest Treasure on this side Heaven, whither also it tends to leads us at last. Why? It is *able to save our Souls*; which is more than can in any wise be said, of the riches, honours, and pleasures of the World. For, these things are much more likely to *lose*, than to save our Souls; having in fact, proved the ruin and destruction of many an unhappy man.—But the divine excellency of the Gospel, as the mean and instrument of saving our Souls, I shall have occasion to insist on more largely hereafter. At present, I would endeavour to raise in your minds, some worthy notion and conception of it, by considering the Gospel under the peculiar character, which the Apostle giveth of it in the Text, where he terms it the *ingrafted Word*. The Gospel goes under different names and appellations in the New Testament; all agreeing in one main design, viz. the setting forth it's various excellencies in one respect or another. Thus, e. g. it is called the *Word of God*; the *Word of his Grace*; the *Word of Salvation*; the *Word of Faith*; the *Word of Reconciliation*; the *Word of Life*; the *Word of Christ*; the *Word of Righteousness*;
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the Word of Truth; and here in the Text, *the ingrafted Word*.

For the better Explication of this Term, we may consider the Gospel, (1.) as a *Word*. And (2.) as an *ingrafted Word*.

1. Let us consider the Gospel, as a *Word*. So it is sometimes called, the *Word*, without any particular epithet, or additional title. Thus, the noble *Beræans* are said to have received the *Word*, with all readiness of mind, when they gave a free and chearful attention to the preaching of the Gospel (*b*). Now, here it will be proper to enquire, *whose* Word the Gospel is; to *whom* it is spoken; *what* it saith; and in what *manner* it speaks.

1. In relation to the first Enquiry, viz. *whose* Word it is? The answer is plain, to wit, that it is the *Word of God*.—It is the Voice of God, which speaks in the Gospel of Christ, and therefore it justly demands universal attention. The mighty God, even the Lord hath spoken, and called the Earth, from the rising of the Sun, to the going down of the same. The glorious sound of his Voice hath reached our ears, and pierced our hearts too, if we have entertained his Word in a right manner, by receiving it, *not as the Word of Men*, but, *as it is in Truth*, the Word of God (*i*). But,

2. To *whom* doth God speak in his Word? It is to the children of Men. His Discourse

(*b*) Acts xvii. 11.

(*i*) 1 Theff. ii. 13.

is directed to the inhabitants of our World. And thus, God speaks to a guilty World, a World which lieth in wickedness, and therefore greatly wants, but little deserves, advice from Heaven. It is a dark World, which wants light; a bad World, which needs reforming; a miserable, unhappy lost World, which wants Salvation and sovereign Mercy. Behold here, a scene worthy of the divine interposition! Accordingly, thus saith the Wisdom of God, *Unto you, O Men, I call, and my Voice is to the sons of Men. O ye simple, understand Wisdom; and ye fools be of an understanding heart. Hear, for I will speak of excellent things, and the opening of my lips shall be right things (k).* This leads us to enquire,

3. *What it is, which God speaks to us in his Word?* The proper use of words, is to express our thoughts, and to communicate our sentiments and ideas to others. — And thus, when God speaks, the great and gracious design of his Word, is to declare his Mind and Will to Men, in order to make them wiser and better, more holy and happy. — In this way, the whole counsel of God is declared, in reference to the grand and important affair of our eternal Salvation. As the Word of God speaks *to us*, so it treats of matters, which properly and most nearly concern us. What they are doing in other Worlds,

(k) Prov. viii. 4—6.

Worlds, and what passeth in other and more remote parts of the Universe, these things are as foreign to ourselves, as the distant Worlds, where they are transacted; and therefore the divine Oracles are wisely silent upon that head. They only speak to us about our own personal concerns, the high concernments of our immortal Souls; instructing us what we must believe, and be, and do, that we may be blessed and happy for ever. More especially, the Gospel explains the way and method of Salvation by Jesus Christ. On which account, it is termed the *Word of God's Grace* (l). Because God's Love to mankind is there revealed, by Christ our common Saviour and Redeemer. In the same view, the Gospel is also stiled the *Word of Reconciliation*; as it informs us, that God is in Christ reconciling the World to himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them; and invites us to accept of Reconciliation with God, upon the terms of the Christian Covenant (m).

4. Finally, as to the *manner* in which God speaks to us in his Word; it is with great *plainness* and *condescension*, but also with great *majesty* and *authority*. The Word of God is the best and *plainest* interpreter of his Mind and Will to mankind. Some distant hints and intimations of his Mind, are given us by the Voice of Reason. But the Voice

B b 2

of

(l) Acts xx. 32.

(m) 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

of divine Revelation speaks a clearer and a more distinct language. General instruction springs from the visible Works of God ; but his holy Word gives plainer and more particular directions in the affair of Religion, adapted to the meanest capacity. Hence that Observation of the Psalmist. *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul; the Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple* (n). But, if God speaks to us in his Word with great *plainness*, he doth it also with great *condescension*. For, is it not infinite condescension in the great God of Heaven and Earth, to vouchsafe to speak unto us, sinful dust and ashes as we are? Sufficient cause have we given him to be too much displeased with us, to give us either a *Word*, or a *Look*, except an angry one. And doth his glorious Majesty deign to speak to us, and to speak kindly? What condescending Goodness is this ! After all, the divine Being doth not stoop below himself ; for, still he speaks with *Majesty* and *Authority*. What can be more solemn and awful, than to hear God speaking to Men, and directing his Discourse to us? *The Word of God !* Methinks, there is an awful sublimity and grandeur in the very expression. *Hear, O Heavens, and give ear, O Earth, for the Lord hath spoken !* When God speaks, all the World should listen. Wherefore, *he that hath ears to hear,*
let

(n) Psal. xix. 7.

let him hear. For, the Voice of God justly challengeth universal attention.

So much for the first thing proposed to consideration, viz. The Gospel considered as a *Word*. In the next place,

2. We are to consider it, as an *ingrafted Word*. “And receive with Meekness, saith “the Apostle, the *ingrafted Word*.” Now, the Gospel may be considered as an *ingrafted Word*, in the following respects.

1. As it is ingrafted upon the stock of those religious Principles, which had been cultivated under former divine Dispensations. Natural Religion is the foundation of revealed; and the Jewish Religion was an introduction to the Christian. And thus, the Gospel of Christ is a heavenly Plant, *inoculated*, as it were, or inserted into that System of moral and religious Principles, which divine Wisdom had laid in before, as the ground and foundation of Christianity. “I have “*planted*,” saith the Apostle, speaking of the ministration of the Gospel (o).

2. In respect to the *searching power*, and *penetrating force* of the Gospel, it may have this Epithet of an *ingrafted Word*. This divine Word hath a most apt and proper tendency to pierce the mind, penetrate the conscience, and break into the heart of a Sinner, with a mighty force and energy. And no wonder it hath so, when we consider whose

B b 3

Word

Word it is, viz. the Word of the living God, who hath a thorough knowledge of human Nature, and how the heart of man is framed; and so perfectly understands, by what means and motives it may be wrought upon in the most efficacious manner. (p) *The Word of God is quick, or fervid, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged Sword; piercing (like lightning) even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts, and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature, that is not manifest in his (God's) sight; but all things are naked and open to the eye of him, with whom we have to do. We have all to do with God, and he with us, particularly in his holy Word, whereby he addresseth himself to every one of us. And, since our Hearts lie open to his survey, since our Souls are naked in his sight, he can speak home and to the purpose; rip up the dark and secret recesses of the Mind, by the penetrating force of his Word, and lay every man open to himself.*

3. The Gospel is an *ingrafted* Word, in respect to it's *fruitful Efficacy* and Virtue. It is not a dead but living Graft, of the best and most generous kind; and accordingly it produceth the most excellent fruit in every Soul, where it is duly digested and properly entertained. It is therefore not improperly called

(p) Heb. iv. 12, 13.

called by the Apostle, the *Word of Life* (q). It is a vital living Word, and the heavenly seed of a spiritual life, in every believing heart. In which view, Christians are said *to be born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever* (r). The Word of God enriches the Mind with saving Truth, adorns the Soul with divine Virtue, and fills the Spirit with heavenly Peace and Comfort, when it takes root downward, and brings forth fruit upward.—And indeed, it is *then* most properly an ingrafted Word, and able to save our Souls from utter excision and extermination, when it takes deep root in our hearts, and brings forth the genuine fruits of holiness in our lives.

And thus we have considered, *what* it is which we are required to receive, viz. the *ingrafted Word*.—I proceed now to enquire,

(2.) What is implied, in *receiving* this Word. Here let me observe,

1. The least thing that can be implied in it, is to give proper *attention* to the Word of God. When God speaks, we should give him the hearing. Thus, it is said of the *Beræans*, mentioned before, that they *received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so* (s). These excellent and wor-

B b 4

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(q) Phil. ii. 16.

(r) 1 Pet. i. 23.

(s) Acts xvii. 11.

thy persons gave diligent and delightful attention to the Word preached, and took honest pains to compare what was said, with what was written, in order to their being fully satisfied of the Truth and Importance of what was spoken.

2. To receive the Word, is to *believe* it. The Word of God carries it's own divine evidence and authority along with it. So that if we consider it impartially, if we study it with minds open to conviction, we shall yield a firm assent to it, and embrace it with a full assurance of Faith. And verily the Word will not profit us, except it be mixed with Faith in them that hear it, or read it. But great is the advantage which will result from a firm belief of God's Word ; because it will prepare and dispose our Souls, to receive the best impressions from the holy Truths therein contained. Accordingly, in this manner did those persons receive the Word, of whom it is said, (t) that *they who received his Word gladly, were baptized* ; that is, in consequence of their *believing* the Gospel, at the time of it's first Publication.

3. It is to admit it into our *hearts*, and retain it in our *memories* and *affections*. Thus much must necessarily be implied, in receiving the Word, as an *ingrafted* Word. It must take full hold of our hearts, and settle itself in our affections, and produce those lively and

(t) Acts ii. 41.

and lasting impressions in our Souls, which will make us not forgetful hearers, but doers of the Word, and of the Work enjoined by it (u). In short, we must receive the Truth, not only in the light of it, but also in the love, life, and power of it. For, as hearing the Word will not profit us, unless we believe it, so the bare belief of the Word, will nothing avail us, if our temper and conduct is not conformable to it.

(3.) I come to enquire, with what *preparation*, and in what *manner* we are to receive the Word. The rule here laid down by the Apostle, is this, viz. To lay aside all *Filthiness, and Superfluity of Naughtiness, and receive with Meekness the ingrafted Word.*

1. As to the *preparation* requisite in the case, we must *lay apart all Filthiness, and Superfluity of Naughtiness.* This language alludes, either to the clearing of the soil from weeds and rubbish, where a Tree is to be planted; or rather, as I observed before, to the pruning away of all filthy and superfluous Branches from the Stock into which it is to be ingrafted. — And so the meaning of the words is this, that we must divest ourselves of all carnal prejudices, and corrupt affections; that having minds open to conviction, the holy Truths of God's Word may find a free and easy admittance into our hearts. And certainly, if persons would use
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(u) Ver. 25.

the least consideration in this matter, nothing could appear more reasonable, than absolutely to resign up our Understanding to the great Father of Lights, and utterly abandon every prejudice, and every lust, which contradicts the Wisdom, and opposeth the Will of God. We should therefore be willing to sacrifice every fond Opinion, and every darling Passion to the superior love of Truth and Virtue. This is the happy frame and disposition of Mind, with which we should ever entertain the Word of God. *Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.* This is to lay apart all Filthiness, and Superfluity of Naughtiness (x).

2. In respect to the *manner*, in which we are to receive the Word, we must receive it with *Meekness*. And *receive with Meekness* the ingrafted Word; that is to say, with a humble and teachable disposition, patient of reproof, and willing to learn, even the most disagreeable Truths, and such as are most contrary to flesh and blood. If the Word of God happen to contradict and condemn any preconceived Notions, or allowed Practices of our own, we must not therefore take offence at it, nor be disgusted at the faithful Dispensers of it, for dealing so plainly and closely

(x) Compare with the Text, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

closely with us. If any person, for instance, should suppose (as it seems, by what he saith in the Context, some people, in the Apostle's days, were inclined to think) that God is the Author of Sin; he should not take it amiss to be told of his error, but calmly kearken to Reason, and quietly give up his mistake, out of regard to the authority of God's Word, which clearly affirms the contrary.

Again; to mention another case, not uncommon in the Apostle's days, nor perhaps in our own; when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold; when party-rage and interest divides mens hearts, and sowers their spirits, and almost roots out every thing like a Christian Temper; when there is little to be heard in ordinary conversation, but railing and backbiting, hard censures, and bitter reflections upon one another; no man should be offended with the Word of Christ, for exhorting us to *love one another*, and to *speak evil of no man*. On the contrary, every guilty person should meekly submit to the reproof, and reflect upon the matter with deep sorrow and repentance, remembering, that the Wrath of man worketh not the Righteousness of God. In short, whatever Mistakes or Crimes we are guilty of, we should patiently hear of these things, without being out of humour with any thing but with ourselves, and with our Sins and Follies.

II. I pro-

II. I proceed to consider the *Argument*, or *Motive*, suggested by the Apostle, in order to enforce this Christian Duty. The Argument is couched in these words, *which is able to save your Souls*. Words few in number, but pregnant and weighty in sense.—Now, in order to display the force of this Argument, I shall insist upon the following heads of Discourse.

1. I shall consider, what is meant by *saving our Souls*.

2. Shew that the ingrafted Word, is *able* to save our Souls. And,

3. Represent to you the *strength* and *force* of this *Argument*, by some proper Considerations.

1. Let us consider, what is meant by *saving our Souls*. This saving of our Souls is, no doubt, some great and weighty matter; some very valuable and important privilege; the consideration whereof, the Apostle reasonably thought would have a mighty force and influence upon all persons. It is something of greater moment than the saving of mens Estates, and advancing of them to an high degree of worldly Prosperity and Glory. It is not therefore a temporal Salvation, such as the carnal minded *Jews* dreamed of; I say, it is not such a Salvation as *this*, which is intended in the Text, but a spiritual and eternal Salvation. It is therefore a Salvation, in which the *Body* also will have a share; but the

the *Soul* only is expressly mentioned ; because the fate of the Body will be determined by the state and condition of the Soul. This being premised, I proceed to observe, that by saving our Souls, we are to understand their being delivered from a state of Sin and Misery, and finally fixed in a state of perfect Holiness, and consummate Happiness.—Therefore, for a Man to have his Soul saved, is to get into a pardoned and sanctified state in this World, and afterwards advanced to a state of glorious Felicity in the World to come.—A matter of the greatest and most comfortable importance. Who would not put in for a share in such a valuable privilege, in so desirable a blessing ? How glad should every man be to have his Soul saved ! And what a profound respect and veneration should we have for every thing that looks this way, and hath an apt tendency to promote the blessed design ; especially for the ingrafted Word, which as the Apostle, here affirms, is *able* to save our Souls ! But how doth this appear ? This leads me in the next place,

2. To *shew* that the ingrafted Word, that is, the Gospel, is *able* to save our Souls. But here let me premise, that this Word is no otherwise able to save our Souls, than only as a fit Instrument in the hands of God to promote our Salvation, through his blessing accompanying our sincere endeavours in Religion. In proof of this assertion, I need only
refer

refer you to that Prayer, which Christ addressed to his heavenly Father, on the behalf of his Disciples. (y) *Sanctify them thro' thy Truth; thy Word is Truth.* The Word of God is Truth, divine and heavenly Truth, and a most excellent *mean* of our Sanctification. But then, it is so only through the blessing of God; because our blessed Saviour would have had no occasion to pray the *Father* to sanctify his Disciples through the Truth, if the Truth could have sanctified them of itself, without the concurrence of his blessing, on their own endeavours.—This being premised, I shall now attempt to shew, that the Word of God, considered especially as an *ingrafted* Word, deeply rooted in our hearts, is *really* able to save our Souls, under the restriction and limitation aforesaid.—In which view, let me observe, that, *this* is the *testimony* which the Word of God bears of itself; God hath given us his holy Word for this *very end* and purpose; it is admirably well *fitted* and *contrived* to answer this design; and it will actually produce this blessed effect in every Soul, that giveth it due entertainment.

1. This is the testimony which the Word of God bears of itself; viz. that it is *able to save our Souls*. And this testimony is true; for the Oracle of Truth cannot lie. Whatever ignorant or designing Men may pretend,
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in order to exalt their own uncertain Traditions, and substitute them in the room of Scripture; the all-wise God must be allowed to understand best the excellency, and usefulness, and perfection of his own Word. Accordingly, the Word of God, if we go no further than the Text, testifies of itself, in plain and express terms, that it *is* able to save our Souls. To the same purpose St. Paul assures us, that *the holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto Salvation, through Faith, which is in Christ Jesus* (z). In which passage, by the *holy Scriptures* are strictly and properly meant, the Writings of the Old Testament, the Canon of the New Testament, not being then compiled.—But when the Apostle adds, *Faith which is in Christ Jesus*, this comprehends the Christian Revelation. In short, it was upon this very account, that St. Paul was *not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ*, viz. because *it is the Power of God unto Salvation, to every one that believeth* (a). And it must be acknowledged, that except we do believe the Gospel, and obey it, we shall be never the wiser or the better for it. But, provided we cordially embrace it, we shall have happy experience of it's saving energy and power. For,

2. God hath given us his holy Word, for this *very end and purpose*. And, certain it is, absolutely certain, that divine Wisdom would
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(z) 2 Tim. iii. 15,

(a) Rom. i. 16.

never make choice of Means insufficient, to be served by them. Now, that the Gospel is given us to be the Mean of our Salvation, evidently appears from it's true Nature, it's proper Tendency, and professed Design. For, this reason it is called the *Word of Salvation* (*b*). Because, it declareth the method *whereby*, and the terms *whereupon*, we must be saved ; and all *this* it doth, with a plain intention to invite and persuade us to secure our interest in the Christian Salvation. Since the wise Goodness of God hath given us his Word for this very end and purpose ; we have no room to doubt, but all the reason in the World to believe, that it is able to save our Souls, through his favour and blessing, which is never wanting to honest and faithful endeavours.

3. The Word of God is admirably well *fitted* and *contrived* to answer *this Design*. Thus much may not only be inferred, in general, from the Wisdom of God in appointing it to be the Mean and Instrument of our Salvation, but likewise from the Frame and Contexture of the Gospel itself. Because it supplies us with all those helps and advantages for Religion and Happiness, which can reasonably be desired and expected from any Means whatsoever. For, what could we wish for more, than to have a perfect rule of Faith and Practice laid before us, so as to want no
 necessary

(*b*) Acts xiii. 26.

necessary direction for knowing our Duty, nor any proper motives and persuasives to the doing of it? Now, such a Rule we have in the Christian Revelation. There is no essential Principle, no important Precept, no necessary Motive of Religion, but what is included or implied in the Gospel of Christ.

This ingrafted Word, is the Word of Truth (c). It is not only a true Word, but it contains a most excellent *System* of religious and moral Truth, which pours upon the believing Soul, a marvellous light, placing the great objects of Religion in the strongest point of view. Therefore, it affords us ample instruction and information in matters of the highest concernment to our everlasting welfare. And thus it is able to save our Souls, because it is *able to make us wise unto Salvation (d).*

Again—It is the Word of Righteousness (e). It lays down, not only the best Principles, but the most excellent Rules and Precepts, for the government of our lives and actions, in all the parts and branches of practical Religion. For, it is *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in Righteousness; that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works (f).* In which words, by the *Man of God*, is most probably meant the *Minister of God*,

(c) See Ver. 18.

(d) 2 Tim. iii. 15.

(e) Heb. v. 13.

(f) 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

But then, if the Ministers of God have all proper instructions from his Word, for teaching others the perfect knowledge of their Duty, it follows, that we have a compleat Rule of practical Religion in God's holy Word ; yet for the better understanding and applying of this divine Rule, the stated Ministrations of the Gospel are of great use and service to common people. And therefore, by the way, those persons seem to mistake the point, who alledge the Sufficiency of Scripture, as an argument for the non-necessity of a standing Ministry. Because, a standing Ministry being a Gospel Institution, the Sufficiency of Scripture ought to be considered in connexion with it, not in opposition to it. To return from this digression and proceed.

The Gospel of Christ wants no *motives*, either of comfort or of terror, to work both upon our hopes and fears ; and thereby persuade us to work out our own Salvation. It contains the richest promises of all divine blessings for our encouragement and support in the service of God ; *Mercy* to pardon, *Grace* to help in time of need, and *eternal Life* to make us happy for ever, when time shall be no more. Besides, we have here the perfect *Example* of Christ, going before us all the way to Heaven ; which serve at once, both for a direction and a motive, in the great affair of Religion. — Now, as these things

things are very apt Means to work upon our *hopes*, so there are other Considerations propounded in the Gospel, which are no less fit and proper to operate strongly upon our *fears*; that so, the human Heart being, as it were, twisted about every way by the ingrafted Word, Religion may take the faster hold of us by one handle or another, according to the different temper and complexion of our Souls. In this view, let me refer you to those words of the Apostle, (g) *Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For, we must all appear before the Judgement-Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade Men.*

4. Let me add, the Word of God will *actually* produce this happy effect in every Soul, where it is properly received, and duly entertained. It is so far able to save our Souls, that it will effectually and infallibly do it, by being ingrafted in our hearts, and forming in us the best Principles, and the most excellent Dispositions. It will produce Faith and Repentance, and evangelical Holiness, and Christian Perfection; make us partakers of a divine Nature, and so fit and qualify us for the divine Presence in Heaven.

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Now,

Now, all these Considerations laid together, abundantly *prove* the Truth of the point before us, viz. that the ingrafted Word of the Gospel, is able to save our Souls.

3. I come to represent to you the *strength* and *force* of this Argument, as a *motive* to the Duty enjoined in the Text. To which end and purpose, let me suggest to you the following plain and obvious Reflections.

1. Every Man hath a Soul to *save*; the Salvation whereof is to himself a matter of the greatest moment in the World. *For what shall it profit a Man, if he should gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul (h)?* When a Man has lost his Soul, what shall he give to get it again, or to retrieve and compensate the loss? No doubt, he would then (how light soever he made of the matter before) give all the World back again, if he had it, to ransom his Soul from eternal Perdition. But the offer would be made in vain. A Soul lost out of time, is lost to all Eternity. And yet, let me further observe,

2. Your Souls must either be *lost* or *saved*. There is no medium between these two great extremes; the extreme of Happiness, or the extreme of Misery. The one or the other must be the lot of every Man. And, it is easy to see, *which* of the two we should
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(h) Matt. xvi. 26.

all chuse. For, who that considers what he doth, would willingly lose his Soul, his precious immortal Soul, when he hath an opportunity for saving it? It is certainly the greatest folly and madness in the World for Men to neglect the Salvation of their Souls, when their Souls must either be lost or saved eternally, and that too in a short time.

3. Your Souls are in great *danger* to be lost, unless due care be taken of them. For, according as you behave yourselves in this present state of Probation, so it will fare with you in a future and final state of Retribution. And, my dear Friends, look *about* you, and look *within* you, and then tell me, are you in no danger of neglecting God and your Souls in this present evil World? A World so full of sin and temptation! They, that have the *lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*, to encounter upon Earth, in their way to Heaven, are certainly exposed to very imminent danger; which therefore we should be exceeding glad to secure ourselves from, by all Means possible.

4. Your Souls are already in a lost condition, if you be in a state of Sin and Enmity with God. It is true, they are not so lost at present, as to be lost irrecoverably. Blessed be God, a way of Salvation is revealed to us in the Gospel of Christ. But since we are in a perishing condition, upon the very brink

of eternal destruction, ready to be overwhelmed with the deluge of God's Wrath, and swept away into the gloomy regions of darkness, and everlasting despair ; should we not open our eyes, and take warning to flee from the Wrath to come ; and, in consequence of this, make use of any proper helps to forward and facilitate our happy escape ?

5. Your Souls must be finally lost, and inevitably perish, if you do not accept, and duly improve the Means of Salvation under the Gospel. For, *how shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation ?* as the Apostle pleads in this very case (i). Great Salvation indeed ! The greatest that ever was, or ever will, or ever can be ; whether we consider the *End*, or the *Means* of the Christian Salvation. Because greater advantages for Virtue and Happiness cannot be conceived, than those which we enjoy under the light of the Gospel. If then, we either slight the Gospel, or, do not heartily embrace it, and freely receive it into our Souls, as an ingrafted Word ; we shall be no better, but much the worse for it ; because, we shall be found to reject the Counsel of God against ourselves, and to renounce the appointed Means of our own Salvation. How much then doth it concern every one of us, to *lay apart all Filthiness, and Superfluity of Naughtiness, and to*
receive

(i) Heb. ii. 3.

receive with Meekness the ingrafted Word of Gospel Truth and Grace! For, on the other hand,

6. Our Souls will be saved, if we receive the Gospel in a right manner, and according to the method here prescribed. Because, as appears by what has been said before, it is able to save our Souls. And it will not fail to attain this happy end, under the blessing of God, if we give it a proper reception. Now, this consideration surely is of sufficient weight and moment, to persuade us all, to comply with the Apostle's advice in the Text, and to enforce the practice of the Duty here by him enjoined. For, can *Filthiness, and Superfluity of Naughtiness*, (base and contemptible things in their own nature) can any false Prejudice or polluting Lust, be dearer to you than the Salvation of your Souls? Or, would you rather lose your Souls than part with your Sins? God forbid! I hope no Person here is so far lost already, to all sense of duty and interest, as to prefer the short lived pleasures of Sin, before the joys of Eternity; and the damnation of Hell, before the pains and trouble of working out his own Salvation with fear and trembling. Better tremble now, than perish hereafter, for ever.

I shall now conclude this Subject with the following Reflections.

1. We learn from hence, the absolute Sufficiency of God's Word, as a Rule and external Mean, to answer the valuable ends and purposes of Religion. Let us therefore heartily bless God for such an excellent Instrument of our Salvation, and reject all human unwritten Traditions in Religion as useless Lumber.

2. How inexcusable are all those unhappy Persons, that perish under the Gospel! Since it is able to save our Souls, what shall we say, what apology shall we make for ourselves, if, after all, our Souls are not saved, but lost under it? Sad supposition. Oh that it were no more than supposition! But alas, is it not the case in fact, with too many Persons, who have lived within the Pale of the Christian Church? Now, all such Men and Women must be utterly and for ever inexcusable. Because they perish, not for want of sufficient Means of Salvation, but because they *did* not, and *would* not make a proper use and improvement of those Means.

3. We see here the *true reason*, why the Gospel is attended with no more success in the World; viz. because Men will not receive it in a proper manner. They will not lay apart all Filthiness and Superfluity of Naughtiness, and receive the divine Word with Meekness and Humility. On the contrary, they entertain strong prejudices against the

the Truth, and indulge those sensual lusts and passions, which cause them to take great offence at the pure and spiritual Religion of Christ. And so, this is the Condemnation, that light is come into the World, and Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. God grant it may not be the Condemnation of any here.

4. We may infer from hence, what should be our fixed and governing aim in hearing God's Word, viz. the saving of our Souls.—My Friends, you should not come here, or go any where else, to hear the Word, merely in compliance with common Custom, or out of a vain Curiosity, to hear what the Preacher would say, and how he performed, and so go home again little wiser or-better than you came. This is a very useless, unprofitable, not to say profane, though, perhaps, a too common way of attending on the sacred Ministrations of the Gospel. If the great design of God's Word is to save our Souls, this surely ought to be our design, our fixed end and aim in reading and hearing it.

5. We may conclude, upon the whole, that we should be swift to *bear*, as the Apostle adviseth in the Context. We should gladly embrace all opportunities for attending the Means of divine Instruction, whether in public or in private.—But then, permit me to leave with you, one necessary Caution,

tion, suggested also by the Apostle. And what is that? *Be not Hearers of the Word only, but Doers of it, deceiving your own selves.* Hearing the Word only, will bring no Man to Heaven; you must be Doers of the Work, prescribed by the Word, that you may be blessed in your deeds. For, *behold, the ax is laid to the root of the tree; therefore, every tree, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*






DISCOURSE XVII.

On the Leaven of the Pharisees, and
of the Sadducees.



MATTH. xvi. 6.

*Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed, and
beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees, and
of the Sadducees.*


THOUGH *Extremes are dan-*
gerous, as the common saying is,
 nothing is more common than
 for Persons to run into Extremes,
 especially in the affair of Religion, that most
 weighty and serious affair. Blind Supersti-
 tion on the one hand, and wanton Scepticism,
 on the other, are the two opposite points to-
 wards which, the minds of different Men are
 prone to verge more or less ; and by a strange
 Rebound, by a sort of moral Elasticity, while
 they make a strong resistance to the one, they
 sometimes fly back into the other. Thus,
 according

according to an old Observation (a) " Some
 " Men, by flying from Superstition, run in-
 " to the opposite extreme of Atheism, and
 " so they skip over Religion, which lies in
 " the middle."

The truth of which Remark hath been too often verified in all Ages, and amongst all Nations. And I am inclined to think, that the Persons, here mentioned in the Text, are presented to public view, as striking instances and examples of two different Extremes in Religion. For, when our blessed Saviour said to his Disciples, *Take heed, and beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees*, he may be understood to warn them against the superstitious Temper of the former, and a spirit of Libertinism in the latter. Taking then the Caution in this light, it may be of some use and service to Christians of the present Age. For, if there be no religious Sects amongst us, who distinguish themselves under the names of *Pharisees* and of *Sadducees*, yet the spirit and principles of these different Parties and Denominations may still remain in the World. And for that reason, it may be proper for us to guard against *both*, with all due care and caution; so as that by avoiding one Extreme, we may not imprudently fall into the other. In discoursing upon the Subject before us, I propose,

First,

(a) PLUTARC. de Superstit.

First. To premise some general account of the two different Sects or Parties mentioned in the Text.

Secondly. To shew, more particularly, what was faulty and wrong in each of them ; and so what may be supposed to be the proper matter of our Saviour's Caution, with reference to them both.

Thirdly. To expose the grounds of their different mistakes in Religion, and prove the absurdity of their peculiar Systems. And,

Fourthly. To subjoin some further Considerations, in order to enforce this two-fold Caution in the Text. *Take heed, and beware, &c.*

First. I shall briefly premise some general account of the two different Sects, or Parties mentioned, viz. the *Pharisees* and the *Sadducees*. Concerning the *Names* and *Original* of these two Sects, a learned Writer (*b*), thus observes—" The Original of the *Pharisees* is " not so easy to go back unto, as that of the " *Sadducees* ; nor is the significancy of their " Name so readily determined, and fixed upon, as the other. The *Sadducees*, it is well " known, were so called from *SADOC*, the " first Author of their Sect.—But the time " and occasion of the rising of the *Pharisees*, " is

(*b*) Dr. LIGHTFOOT. Op. Vol. I. Pag. 457.

“ is of more obscurity, and the reason of the
 “ Name admits of more conjectures; as whe-
 “ ther they were so called from *Perush*,
 “ which importeth *Exposition*; for they took
 “ upon them to be great Expositors of the
 “ Law by their *Traditions*; or, from *Pa-*
 “ *rush*, which betokeneth *Separation*; for that
 “ they accounted and pretended themselves
 “ more holy than others of the people, and
 “ so became Separatists from them, as de-
 “ spising them (c).”

After this account of the *Names*, and *Rise*
 of these two *Jewish* Sects, it may be proper
 to add something here of their general Cha-
 racter, as distinguished from each other.
 What Character they bear in the sacred Hi-
 story, is well known to all, that are acquaint-
 ed with the *New Testament*. The *Pharisees*
 appear to have been the greatest professors of
 Religion in the Jewish Church. They were
 the *strictest Sect among the Jews*, according
 to St. Paul's account (d); and their own Hi-
 storian says the same thing of them (e). On
 the other hand, the *Sadducees* were Men of
 more latitude in their Principles, as we learn
 from the following passage. (f) *For, the Sad-*
ducees say, there is no Resurrection, neither
Angel, nor Spirit, but the Pharisees confess
both.

(c) See Luke xviii. 9.

(d) Acts xxvi. 5.

(e) JOSEPH. Lib. I. Cap. 5, &c. Dr. LARDNER.
 Credib. Vol. I. B. I. Chap. IV. Sec. I.

(f) Acts xxiii. 8.

both. So that of the two, the *Pharisees* were in greater repute for Piety than the *Sadducees*; though, at the same time, they were, at the best, but a sort of seeming Saints. For, if they made a shewy profession, they had only the shadow of Religion, without the substance. And, for this reason, our blessed Saviour himself, the best Judge, and the most candid Person in the World, could afford them no better Character than that of *Hypocrites*; a Title, which he often bestows upon them, with honest and faithful freedom, as became a Preacher of Truth and Righteousness. Indeed, Hypocrisy is so deep an ingredient in their dark Character, as that it is called the *Leaven of the Pharisees*. For, in another place (g) we are told, that *He* (meaning Jesus) *began to say to his Disciples first of all, Beware ye of the Leaven of the Pharisees, which is Hypocrisy.*

For a further account of both these Sects among the Jews, I might refer you to what JOSEPHUS hath written of them (h). But, for brevity's sake, I shall only take notice of some of his expressions under the next head of Discourse, to which I proceed.

Secondly. I am to shew, more particularly, what was faulty and wrong in each of their Characters; and so, what may be supposed

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(g) Luke xii. 1.

(h) Antiq. Lib. XVIII. Cap. II.

to be the proper matter of our Saviour's Caution, with reference to them both respectively, *Take heed, and beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees.* In which words, as Christ explained his own meaning to his Disciples (*i*), he spake not of the *Leaven of Bread, but of the Doctrine of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees.* The *Doctrine* then of these different Sects, is the thing here directly intended, so far as it had any influence and effect upon their moral Character; and no further can any Doctrines or Opinions be of consequence to any Persons. And thus, the peculiar Tenets and Principles of these leading Men, in the Jewish Church and Nation, whereby the one had grossly *corrupted*, and the other, in a manner, *subverted* the true Religion, are the *Leaven* of which our Lord cautioned his Disciples to *take heed, and beware.*

I. In relation to the *Pharisees* (to begin with them first in order) the Doctrine of *human Traditions*, upon which they laid so great a stress in Religion, seems to have been the peculiar *Doctrine* of that Sect. Concerning them we are expressly told, (*k*) they taught for *Doctrines the Commandments of men*; in consequence of which (strange to think at, but not stranger than true) they made the *Commandments of God*, by their *Tradition, of none effect*, in some cases. And conformably
to

(*i*) Ver. 12.(*k*) Matt. xv. 6, 9.

to this Scripture account, JOSEPHUS relates of the *Pharisees*, that—"they pay such a Veneration to the Counsels, or Decrees of their *Elders*, as to hearken to them without any Contradiction or Controul." This, I humbly conceive, discovers the grand foible of those Men, and lays open the true source of all their other errors and mistakes in Religion, viz. their placing a *blind, implicit Faith* in fallible Men. Which hath been the prolific root of *Superstition* in all Ages, and continues so to be unto this day.

II. Proceed we now to the *Sadducees*. This Sect was *leavened* with a spirit of *Scepticism*; which led them to dispute some of the most important Doctrines and Principles of Religion. We have seen before, that they denied a future State. And it is further observable, that they were so tenacious of their error, as that they had the assurance to dispute with Christ himself, against the Doctrine of a Resurrection (!). Both which accounts, agree to what JOSEPHUS reports of the *Sadducees*. He says, — "The *Sadducees* hold, that our Bodies and Souls die together, and that we have no other Obligation upon us, than to observe the Law;" meaning the Law of *Moses*, which was the *National Law* of the Jews, and therefore, as such, was enforced only by *temporal* Sanctions. And so upon this plan, the *Sadducees*

(!) Matt. xxii. 23, &c.

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formed themselves. All the motives of their religious Obedience, were purely worldly Considerations, and they had no regard at all to a future state of recompence, or to the reward of good Men, at the *Resurrection of the just* (m).

The same Historian says of the *Sadducees*, “ They value themselves upon a right “ they have to dispute the highest points “ with their Teachers (n).” As this Remark is agreeable to what was observed before of the *Sadducees*, disputing the point of a *Resurrection* with Christ, who was a *Teacher come from God* (o) ; so it seems to lead us into the true secret of their Character, and plainly shews, from whence all their loose Principles in Religion flowed ; viz. from a *false* freedom of thinking, from a light, vain, and sceptical turn of Mind.

In short, the *Sadducees* appear to have been the *Free-thinkers* of that Age ; I mean, in the bad sense of the word. For, as one of our excellent Writers in defence of Christianity hath well observed, (p) “ A just liberty of “ thinking (which on the one hand, is not governed

(m) Luke xiv. 14:

(n) Or, “ They esteem it a Virtue to contradict the “ Wisdom of their Teachers ;” as the Greek may be rendered. Vid. JOSEPH. J. Antiq. Lib. XVIII. Cap. 2. Pag. 548. Edit. Basil.

(o) John iii. 2.

(p) Dr. LELAND’s Answer to Moral Philosopher. Pret.

“ governed by old and popular Prejudices ;
 “ nor, on the other hand, led aside by the
 “ affectation of Novelty, and a desire of
 “ thinking out of the common way) which
 “ hath nothing but Truth in view, and the
 “ serving the cause of real Goodness and
 “ Righteousness, is certainly one of the no-
 “ blest things in the World.—To be a Free-
 “ thinker in *this*, which is the most proper
 “ sense of the word, must be owned to be
 “ an honourable and amiable Character.”—

But this, in fact, appears not to be the Character of many Persons, who pretend to think freely. If, e. g. the *Sadducees* had been fair, candid, impartial Enquirers after sacred Truth, it is hardly credible that they could have fallen into those Errors and Mistakes in Religion, which they maintained.

Thus have I endeavoured to trace the two Characters in the Text, up to their fountain-head, and pointed out the grand source of their several and respective Errors and Corruptions in Religion. The sum of all is this ; the *Pharisees* were governed by a blind, implicit Faith in fallible Men, which *swallowed* every thing ; and the *Sadducees* were possessed with a spirit of Scepticism, and Contradiction, which *disputed* every thing. A strange contrast of Characters ! Which clearly shews, how liable Men are to run into opposite Extremes, even in the great affair of Religion

itself. But, “the middle way is the safest
“and the best.”

Thirdly. I come to expose the *grounds* of their different Mistakes in Religion, and prove the Absurdity of their peculiar Systems. I do not here propose to enter into a particular discussion of the private Opinions embraced by either Sect; but shall confine myself to what hath been suggested already concerning their general Character; considering the one, as an herd of stupid Bigots, and the other, as a flock of wild Sceptics.

I. To begin with the *Pharisees*, according to the precedence they have in the words of the Text. What their distinguishing Character was, we have seen before; namely, their laying an high stress upon human Traditions, and placing a blind, implicit Faith in fallible Men. Which is a case too common in the World, even the Christian World; and for that reason it deserves, and justly demands our particular and serious consideration. It may, perhaps, be asked, when are any Persons guilty of that error in the *conduct of their Understanding*, which is charged upon the *Pharisees* of old? — To which I answer.
“When they will not be at the pains to ex-
“amine, think, and judge for themselves,
“in matters of Religion, according to the
“best light they can get from the Word of
“God, and the pure dictates of their own
“Reason,

“ Reason, in the diligent use of any proper
 “ means of information, which lie in their
 “ way ; but, instead of this impartial enqui-
 “ ry after Truth, entertain a superstitious
 “ Veneration for human Traditions, resign
 “ their Understanding to the absolute direc-
 “ tion of others, and, as it were, put out
 “ their own eyes, that they may see with
 “ other Men’s, if that can be properly seeing
 “ at all.”—This was the sad and pitiful case
 of the *Pbarisees*, whose excessive and extra-
 vagant regard for the *Traditions of the Elders*,
 caused them to swallow these things in the
 lump, unexamined ; although in many in-
 stances they clashed with the Word of God,
 and made his Commandments of none effect ;
 as was before observed.

(1.) One obvious Consideration, which
 here offers itself to our thoughts is this.—
 The *evil Consequences* of such an implicit Faith
 in fallible Men, are enough to expose it suf-
 ficiently. For, alas, what sad confusion and
 disorder hath been introduced this way into
 the Church of the *living God*, both in earlier
 and later Ages ! How hath the face of true
 Religion, that divine Form, been disfigured,
 and debased with human Follies and Inven-
 tions ! But, though a Reformation of such a-
 buses, in any part of the Christian Church,
 is a thing greatly to be desired, there is little
 ground to expect it, so long as *Ignorance* is
 held to be the *Mother of Devotion*, and im-

plicit Faith the distinguishing property of a *good Catholick*.

(2.) Besides the ill Consequences of the thing, let me further observe, it is a wretched *abuse* of a Man's *own Reason* and Understanding, to resign it wholly to the direction of others, instead of making Religion the matter of his own serious study, and impartial examination. As Religion is a personal thing, and every Man's own proper and principal concern, so it is a *reasonable Service*, which not only merits, but requires the best use and improvement he can make of his rational and thinking Powers. For, with this design it is, that we are made reasonable, intelligent Creatures, and capable Subjects of moral government; that so we might be able, with divine assistance, to understand the Principles, to discern the Duties, and to weigh the Motives of Religion, in order to the right regulation of our moral temper and conduct. What account then shall we give of ourselves another day to the *Father of Lights*, and the God of Reason, as well as the Author of Revelation, if we suffer our rational Powers and Faculties to lie waste and uncultivated, as to religious Purposes? Is not this hiding our Talent of Reason and Understanding in a Napkin, and leaving it, as it were, to rust under ground; and so must expose us to the doom of the *unprofitable Servant* (q)? But,

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(q) Matt. xxv. 30.

to be cast into *outward darkness*, is a proper punishment of that inward darkness, and disorder of the human Mind, which it hath wilfully contracted by its own supine indolence and sloth, proceeding from a contemptuous flight of Religion, or, at least, a cold indifferency about it. For, darkness to darkness, seems to be as natural, as *dust to dust*.

(3.) Placing an implicit Faith in fallible Men, is a manifest contempt of God's Word, and paying that regard to *human Authority*, which is due only to the *divine*. The Word of God expressly commands us, (r) *to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good*. If it be asked, By what *Rule* must we prove all things? I answer—By the dictates of right Reason, and the doctrines of divine Revelation. These are the two great Lights, which God hath fixed in the Firmament of his Church, like the Sun and the Moon in the Heavens; *the greater Light to rule the Day, and the lesser Light to rule the Night* (s). Therefore the great Father of Lights, most justly expects us, to open our eyes, and admit the bright rays of heavenly Truth, especially as issuing forth from the glorious *Sun of Righteousness*, shining in the Gospel (t). Consequently, we are obliged to make a proper use and improvement of all those Means of religious Instruction, which, through the di-

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(r) 1 Thess. v. 21.

(s) Gen. i. 16.

(t) Mal. iv. 2.

vine favour, we enjoy, both as Men, and as Christians, for the information of our judgments, and the regulation of our lives and actions.

So that for any Men to prohibit the free use of the *holy Scriptures*, and forbid all rational Inquiries into Religion, is to change the *Ordinance of Heaven*, and a prophane contempt of the divine Authority. And is it less so, for Persons to debar themselves of this blessed privilege, by refusing, to read and think, to examine and judge for themselves? *Search the Scriptures*, is our great Master's positive injunction (u). And the noble *Beræans* are highly and justly commended for their studious Inquiries and Researches of that kind (x).

But, if in the room of Scripture and right Reason, Men set up other Rules and Guides in the Church; in this case, they pay that deference and regard to *human Authority*, which is due only to the *divine*; as was hinted before. Thus, in effect, the superstitious Bigots, honour Men more than God. And the same charge, which was brought against the *Pharisees*, justly lies against all Persons of their temper and spirit in this instance, viz. (y) *In vain do they worship me, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of men.*—Here let it be remembered, that these
very

(u) John v. 39.

(x) Acts xvii. 11.

(y) Matt. xv. 9.

very Persons made the Commandments of God of *none effect*, by some of their Traditions, according to a former Observation. And let me further add, that, to make room for lesser matters, they *omitted the weightier things of the Law* (z). This plainly shews, how the *Leaven* of their *Doctrine* ended in the *Leaven of Hypocrisy*, taken notice of before. For, their Doctrine of Traditions led them to substitute Rituals in the room of Morals. In consequence of which, they rested in the shadow of Religion, without the substance. And so for this reason, and upon this account, they are properly stigmatized with the name of *Hypocrites*, or Stage-Players, as the word signifies; because they only *acted a part* in Religion, and personated the religious Character, without realizing it in themselves, or having any just pretensions to it at all.

So much may suffice, concerning the first Character in the Text. Which now appears to be a Character of so dark and gloomy a complexion, that we may well bid it avaunt, and start back from it, with just dislike, to as great a distance as we safely may. But here we should be upon our guard, and use some precaution; lest, while we endeavour to shun one dangerous Rock, we split upon another, and so at last make shipwreck of our Faith, unexpectedly, and surprizingly.

So

(z) Matth. xxiii. 23.

So it hath sometimes happened to certain mercurial Spirits; that taking fright at the ugly phantom of Superstition, they have whirled about to the opposite Extreme of Irreligion.

II. Let us now turn to the *Sadducees*, and see, whether their Sect and Profession rests upon any better foundation, than that of the *Pharisees*, whose case we have been considering.

Here we must recollect, that, as the *Pharisees* were governed by a blind implicit Faith in fallible Men, which readily *swallowed* every thing; so the *Sadducees* were possessed with a Spirit of Scepticism and Contradiction, which wantonly *disputed* every thing. The Men of this complexion, and turn of mind, seem to suppose, that people are entirely at their Liberty, to think as they please, in matters of Religion; and that they are under no moral Obligation to think one way, more than another, even upon points of great and weighty importance. These are the Persons, who are wont to glory in the Name of Free-thinkers. (A Name, however, to which they have but a slender title; being commonly as much enslaved to their own dear Prejudices and Prepossessions, as any Set of Men whatsoever) But they seem to imagine, that to think freely, is to think at random; to think any how, right or wrong, with Reason or without Reason, just as their own Humour

Humour and Fancy may suggest.—Nor is this all.—But let them think as they will; and though their pretended thinking freely, be thinking never so falsely, and absurdly, and contrary to all Truth, Sense, and Reason; yet they expect to be justified in it, purely because *it is* their way of thinking. Nay, if they can but make a shift, of any fashion, or at any rate, to put themselves and others out of conceit with the commonly received Notions and Opinions, of the Times and Places they live in; they clap their wings and crow; make a great merit of it, and boast of the matter as a mighty atchievement. Thus, transported with strange enthusiastic Notions of human Liberty, they run wild and mad in moral Science. And no wonder, if they precipitate themselves into the grossest Errors, by the violence and impetuosity of their extravagant and whimsical Fancies.

What then is to be done in this case? (Which was a case too common in the Jewish Church, particularly among Persons of *Rank and Quality*, the Sect of the *Sadducees* being of that Order) What method is proper to be taken to fix these volatile Gentlemen, if possible, but endeavouring to shew the difference between *true Liberty*, and *Licentiousness* of thinking; by making it appear, that Mankind, both in high and low life, are under a *Law of thinking*, as well as a *Law of acting*. I do not know, whether this matter

ter is duly considered. Much hath been said, and written, about the *Liberty* of thinking, and the *Art* of thinking. But, the *virtue* of thinking, the *duty* of thinking, and the *moral* conduct of the human Understanding, hath not, perhaps, been sufficiently attended to, from a presumption, “ that the Understanding of Man is not a proper Subject of command.”—And I acknowledge the proper Subject of command, in the present case, is Man himself, with all his rational and moral Powers, of which his *Understanding* is one, and a principal one too. As therefore, he is accountable for the use of his other Faculties, so doubtless, Man is under Law and Government, with respect to the use and improvement of his Understanding.

This being premised, I proceed to shew, that Mankind are under a *Law of thinking*, and so, morally obliged to think justly, in all matters of great moment and importance to their Duty and Happiness. To which,

(1.) I urge these words of the Apostle (a), where he exhorts Christians to *think soberly, and as they ought to think*. If this direction was given by St. Paul, directly with an eye to one particular Case, it is however a Rule of larger extent and application. For, it is grounded upon this general maxim, that there is a certain Law of thinking, to which we ought to conform our Sentiments and Opinions,

(a) Rom. xii. 3.

ons, not only in *judging of ourselves*, but of other persons and things also. And what is this Law of thinking, but the natural truth and evidence of things, as they are laid open to our view, by the great *Father of Lights*, who is likewise the *Father of our Spirits*; and to whom we are justly accountable for the use and improvement we make of the rational Powers he hath given us, and of all the Means of instruction he hath afforded us, either by the Light of Nature, or of Revelation. Nothing therefore can be a grosser abuse of the right of private Judgement, which is the natural privilege of every Man, than for Persons to think *rashly* and absurdly, under a pretence of thinking *freely*. For, if our thoughts are free, with respect to *Men*, they are under a Law to *God*; and there is a fixed Rule of thinking, established by him, according to which Men *ought to think*, in the Apostle's phrase. A just freedom of thinking then, consists in *thinking soberly*, without prejudice and partiality, or any undue biases, according to that evidence of things, which the God of Truth hath exhibited to the view of all fair, candid, ingenuous, and honest Minds.

(2.) Let me further observe—There is a Law of *acting*, and consequently, there must be a Law of *thinking* too. The former, I presume, will not be denied by any Persons of common Sobriety, or common Sense; and therefore,

therefore, the latter must be granted, for this plain and obvious reason, i. e. because our Actions must be regulated by our Sentiments, the Understanding of Man being his leading faculty. Thus, Truth is the foundation of Virtue, according to that Observation of an ancient Moralist, (b) “ Virtue cannot subsist
 “ or be supported, without a certain Ortho-
 “ doxy (that is, right thinking, or judging)
 “ in the human Soul.” Right Principles, are, doubtless, the proper ground and foundation of right Practice. For, our Actions cannot be right, if our Principles are wrong, with respect to any matters which affect our moral temper and conduct. Therefore, since there confessedly is a Rule of acting, there must of necessity be a Law of thinking, which obliges us to think soberly and justly in all matters of importance. Because our Actions are to be directed and governed by our Sentiments and Opinions. Let *Sadducees* then know, and let all the conceited Tribe of little Sceptics, and minute Philosophers know, that they have not an absolute, unbounded Liberty to think any how, or any way, but are accountable to God, for what they think and *believe*, as well as for what they practise ; nor is it so unreasonable a thing, as some have imagined, or at least pretended, that *Faith* should be the matter of a divine Command.

(3.) The

(b) HIEROCL. in Aur. Carm.

(3.) The truth of this point might be further argued, from the *absurdity* of the contrary supposition, which would subvert all order and government, and introduce the greatest confusion in the rational and moral World. For, since Mankind are obliged to follow the Light they have, and cannot do otherwise without dispensing with the *Law* of their own *Minds*; this being so; if they were left to their liberty to chuse Light, or Darkness, Truth or Falsehood, for their Guide; if they were under no Obligation to inquire impartially, to think rationally, and to judge wisely; in a word, if wilful Ignorance and Error, were no crime; in that case, the moral difference of things would be confounded, and all sorts of Actions would be *materially*, as well as formally the same. According to that supposition, some of the blackest Vices might occasionally pass for the brightest Virtues; and even those who *think they do God service, by killing his Servants* (c), would be as great Saints, and good Martyrs, as those whom they cruelly murdered, and put to death in the heighth of their blind Zeal. But surely, an hypothesis, attended with such absurdities, needs nothing more to expose it, besides it's own evil and fatal consequences. Upon the whole then, I conclude, that Mankind are under a *Law of thinking*, and so,
are

(c) John xvi. 2.

are morally obliged to think justly in matters of great moment and importance to their Duty and Happiness.

Fourthly. I shall subjoin some further Considerations, in order to enforce this two-fold Caution in the Text. *Take heed, and beware of the Leaven, &c.* And here be it observed, this double Caution may be understood to point at a double danger, against which we should be upon our guard. For, we may be in danger both *of* and *from* the thing which our Lord warned his Disciples against, in the words before us.

I. We may be in danger *of* it. Therefore, *Take heed.* For, as human Nature is still the same now, that it was in our Saviour's time, we may be as liable, as his Disciples were, to the two dangerous Extremes in Religion, spoken of in the Text; viz. the Leaven of the superstitious *Pharisees*, on the one side, and the Leaven of the sceptical *Saducees*, on the other side. This Leaven, or that Leaven, may insinuate itself by insensible degrees, according as the one, or the other meets with a suitable temper to work upon. And, *a little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump (d).* The infection, where once begun, may spread far and wide, through City and Country. Therefore, *Take heed*, both high and low. For all may be in danger; though different

(d) 1 Cor. v. 6. Gal. v. 9.

ferent classes of Men, in this Age, may be liable to different Extremes, as it seems they were in former Days. Those, who keep clear of the *Pharisee*, may be in danger of the *Sadducee*; and so, on the contrary, those who escape the *Sadducee*, may come too near the *Pharisee*, in his Principles and Morals. "There is a Mean in things." And to preserve that golden Mean, so as to avoid both Extremes, is the grand point, at which we should all aim.

II. As we may be in danger of this different sort of Leaven, so, which is worse, and makes the thing more to be dreaded, we may be in great danger *from* it; as appears with awful plainness from what hath been said. Therefore, take heed and beware. The Apostle speaks of the *old Leaven of Malice and Wickedness* (e). And, is there not reason to fear, that the *Leaven*, of which we have been speaking, hath some affinity and connexion with it? But, whither do the Principles of *Pharisaism*, and of *Sadducism*, as explained before, tend, but either to the corruption, or to the subversion of all true Religion? And if Religion be totally destroyed, or only so far depraved and perverted, as not to answer its proper end and design, of engaging Men to the practice of real Piety, Virtue, and Goodness, what must be the consequence, but a general corruption of Manners

(e) 1 Cor. v. 8.

amongst all ranks and degrees, from the highest to the lowest of Mankind?

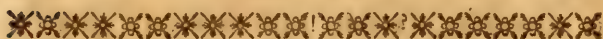
Let us then labour after that sobriety of Mind, which will render us at once both serious, and thereby successful Enquirers after religious and moral Truth, under the guidance of the *Spirit of Truth*; and lead us to *approve the things that are more excellent*, not only in Theory, but in Practice also. Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who *came a Light* into a dark World, a Reformer into a wicked World, and a Saviour into a guilty, miserable, lost World. May the *Truth, as it is in Jesus*, universally spread and prevail, thro' all Nations; and all the Tribes of the Earth, *with one Mind, and one Mouth, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Amen.






DISCOURSE XVIII.

The Dignity of the Christian Name.



JAMES ii. 7.

*Do not they blaspheme that worthy Name, by
the which ye are called?*


T HIS appeal made to Christians,
in the Apostle's Days, to shew the
unreasonableness and impropriety
of courting the favour of rich and
great Men, is grounded upon a public known
fact, viz. that such Persons, particularly a-
mong the leading Men of the *Jews*, were
the bitter Enemies of Christ and his Follow-
ers, whom they persecuted with *evil words*,
as well as with cruel actions. And from hence
I shall take occasion to observe, that,

The Christian Name is a worthy Name.

The truth of which Observation, I pro-
pose to illustrate, by shewing, in what *Re-
spects* the Christian Name is a worthy Name.
And that it is really a worthy Name, will

manifestly appear, if we consider these Three Particulars; viz. The *Person* from whom it is taken; the *Occasion* upon which it was assumed; and the *Character* to which it properly belongs.

I. The Christian Name is a worthy Name, considering the *Person* from whom it is taken; namely, *Christ* himself. For, Christ is a worthy Person, and therefore gives a dignity to the Name derived from him. That Christ is indeed a worthy Person, will evidently appear, if we attend to the evangelical History of his Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven. I shall confine myself, at present, to the two great and illustrious Characters which he sustains in the sacred Records, as *the Son of God*, and the *Saviour of the World*.

(1.) Christ is indisputably, and beyond all Comparison, a worthy Person, as he is the *Son of God, the Only-begotten of the Father*. Behold, (says the evangelical Prophet) (a) *a Virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his Name, Emmanuel*, which (Hebrew word) being interpreted is (in signification) *God-with-us*; as St. Matthew hath observed (b); taking notice, at the same time, that the words of this ancient Prophecy were fulfilled in the case of our Lord's Conception and Birth, of the Vir-
gin

(a) Isa. vii. 14.

(b) Matt. i. 22, 23.

gin *Mary*. This account agrees to what *St. Luke* relates of the appearance of the Angel *Gabriel* to *Mary*, and of the conversation which passed between them, upon that memorable Occasion, as follows. (c) *And the Angel said unto her, Fear not Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy Womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call his Name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, &c. Then said Mary unto the Angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a Man? And the Angel answered, and said unto her, The holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy Thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.* *St. Mark* likewise briefly hints at the same thing in the first words of his Gospel, saying, (d) *The begining of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.* Let us now hear, what the fourth and last Evangelist, *St. John*, says of Christ at the begining of his Gospel also. (e) *In the begining was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God. The same was in the begining with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made, that was made.—And the Word (mentioned before) was made Flesh,*

E e 3

and

(c) *Luke* i. 30—35.(d) *Mark* i. 1.(e) *John* i. 1, 2, 3, 14.

and dwelt among us (and we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father) full of Grace and Truth.

Thus, all the Writers of his History agree to exhibit Christ to the World, under this high and dignified Title, the *Son of God*, his *Only-begotten* Son. Many more passages might be alledged from the *holy Scriptures*, to set forth the Dignity and Glory of his Person. And prudent Men think, that *Scripture Language* is the best and the most proper to be used in describing and defining any object of pure Revelation. It is very remarkable, how some of those pious Writers, who first introduced new Terms of their own into Divinity, and particularly in explaining the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, were filled with fear, suspicion, and jealousy, lest they should profane divine Mysteries by their improper Expressions. When one of them, I mean HILARY, had been discoursing upon that Subject, he excuses himself with much concern, for presuming to make use of *unscriptural* words and phrases; and seems almost to repent of what he had done, saying, “that it was hazarding
“ those things in human Speech, which ought
“ to be the secret Veneration of religious
“ Minds.” For which reason one of our great *Reformers*, the celebrate Mr. CALVIN, having an eye to the Scruples of some good Men upon this head, expresses himself in words

to the following effect. (f) “ This Modesty
 “ and Caution of the holy Men should be a
 “ Warning to us, that we do not severely cen-
 “ sure, and rashly condemn those Persons,
 “ who refuse subscribing to such a form of
 “ words, as we prescribe them, &c.”

I hinted before, that many other Passages of *Scripture* might be produced, to display the Dignity and Glory of Christ's Person. But, for brevity's sake, I shall only mention one Text more for that purpose, which may receive some light from the last words of St. *John* already cited. St. *Paul* says, (g) *And without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness; God was manifest in the Flesh, &c.* This is evidently a description of our Lord Jesus Christ. And if, as St. *John* says, the *Word*, which was in the beginning, and which was with God, and which was God; I say, if this same *Word* was made *Flesh*, then it follows by fair consequence, that *God was manifest in the Flesh*; that is to say, in the Person of *Christ, the Only-begotten of the Father* (h).

E e 4

(2.) As

(f) Instit. Lib. I. Cap. XIII. Sec. 5.

(g) 1 Tim. iii. 16.

(h) Note—In using this language, *Great is the Mystery of Godliness*, St. *Paul* is generally supposed to allude to the *Heathen Mysteries*. See Dr. BENSON in loc. But those sacred Mysteries had always a reference to some *Deity*. And this circumstance, in my humble opinion, greatly favours, not to say confirms, the common reading of the Text, which hath been so much controverted,
 For,

(2.) As Christ is the Son of God, *so he is the Saviour of the World.* Which reflects a further honour upon himself, and gives thereby an additional lustre to the Christian Name. Now, said the Samaritans (i) *we believe and know, that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World.* For (as we read in the preceding Chapter) (k) *God so loved the World, that he gave his Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* For, God sent not his Son into the World to condemn the World, but that the World through him might be saved. A glorious Design; most worthy of God, and most honourable to the Son of God; whose Name, by an express order from Heaven, was called *Jesus*, importing a *Saviour*, because, said the Oracle, *He shall save his People from their Sins* (l).

This

For, if no mention had been made in this case of a God, such an omission had maimed the Apostle's *description* in a most essential point, and obscured the beauty of his fine Allusion. As to what may be said in defence of the common reading, against the Exceptions of GROTIUS and others, the Reader may consult Bishop PEARSON on the Creed, Page 128, edit. 5. ORIGEN is thought to have read here, *Jesus*, or *Christ*, not *God*. See Dr. LARDNER. Credib. Part II. Vol. III. Page 387. and Vol. IX. Page 370, &c. But that *Jesus*, or *Christ*, if no more than a common Man, appeared, or was manifest in the *Flesh*, seems to be no great *Mystery*; for this is the case of every Man that is *born into the World*.

(i) John iv. 42.

(k) Ver. 16, 17.

(l) Matt. i. 21.

This leads us to observe, that Christ was not to be a *temporal Deliverer*, as the worldly-minded *Jews*, who mistook the Nature and Design of their theo-political Constitution (little imagining that it was only intended to usher in the great Messiah, as the *Desire* and common Blessing of *all Nations* (m), and then cease for ever) supposed; but a *spiritual Saviour*, to advance and establish the moral *Kingdom of God*, the *Kingdom of Heaven*. What his great and gracious Errand into our World was, he publicly declared, when he said, (n) *They, that be whole, need not a Physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*. For, as was observed before, he was to *save his People from their Sins*, but there is no saving Men from their Sins, without Repentance and Reformation of Heart and Life. Now, in order to accomplish that good and merciful design, our blessed Saviour taught a most *salutary Doctrine*, which he confirmed, as a solemn Message from God, by his *divine Miracles*. He lived a most excellent and *exemplary Life*; at last, he voluntarily submitted to *Death*, and *suffered for Sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God* (o). Afterwards, he *rose again from the Dead*, in further confirmation of his divine Character, and entred upon the exercise

(m) Hag. ii. 7.

(n) Luke v. 31, 32.

(o) 1 Pet. iii. 18.

cise of *all Power*, which was given unto him, in *Heaven and in Earth* (p). In consequence of which, he commissioned his Apostles to publish his Gospel to the whole World, and gave orders, that *Repentance, and Remission of Sins should be preached, in his Name, among all Nations* (q). Thus our great Redeemer performed the part, not only of a Saviour, but of an Universal Saviour, the *Saviour of the World*. Under which amiable Character we are now beholding him, and I hope, admiring him also.

(1.) This great Physician of distempered Souls, taught a most *salutary Doctrine*. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ are wholesome words, prescribing a *Doctrine, which is according to Godliness* (r). The only Doctrine that can work a Cure, for *healing of the Nations* (s). For, as Sin is the sickness and death, so Holiness is the health and life of the Soul. Accordingly, in the Gospel of Christ universally published, the *Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World* (t).

But, though the *moral Precepts* of the Gospel are confessedly very excellent; it may be

(p) Matt. xxviii. 18.

(q) Matt. xxviii. 19. Mark xvi. 15. Luke xxiv. 41.

(r) 1 Tim. vi. 3.

(s) Rev. xxii. 2.

(t) Tit. ii. 11—14.

be asked, of what Use or Benefit are *positive Institutions*, under this last, and best, and most perfect Dispensation, e. g. *Baptism*, and the *Lord's-Supper*?

To which I answer. These positive Rites are proper appendages of a positive Revelation, and suitable marks of distinction between professed Christians and others. And as they are so few in number, as well as plain and easy to be observed, the observance of them hath no sort of tendency in itself (whatever superstitious use may be made of them, by weak, undiscerning Minds) to lessen our value and regard for the moral duties of Religion. On the contrary, these sacred Rites are calculated and designed, to enforce all moral Obligations upon us more strongly, by the solemnity of a formal dedication of our Persons to God and his Service; first begun in *Baptism*, and afterwards *frequently renewed* in the *Lord's-Supper*. At the same time, these holy Rites suggest proper motives and arguments, to engage, animate, and encourage us in the way of all christian duty, exciting us to all the important instances and expressions of Love to God, and Christ, and one another.

(2.) As our blessed Saviour shewed himself to be the Physician of Souls, so the better to support his Character, and succeed his practice in that useful capacity, he condescended

scended to act as a Physician to Men's Bodies; by his miraculous and amazing Cures. It is a wonderful account we have of these things in the following Passage. (u). *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their Synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of Sickness, and all manner of Disease among the People. And his fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought unto him all sick People, that were taken with divers Diseases and Torments, and those who were possessed with Devils, and those who were Lunatick, and those that had the Palsy, and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of People from Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and beyond Jordan.* The whole Country, you see, was up, and in motion! Having heard the report of his healing Power, and wonderful Operations, People took the pleasing alarm; one told another; and so whole troops of diseased and disordered Persons, resorted to Jesus from all parts; and they returned home again sound and well, even of such Distempers as were thought incurable; and perhaps really were so without a Miracle; however, in fact, they were all cured in a miraculous way and manner.

Not to mention now our Saviour's yet greater Miracles, in *raising the Dead* to life again, e. g. the Daughter of *Jairus* (x); the
Widow

(u) Matt. iv. 23—25.

(x) Mark v. 22, 42.

Widow of *Nain's Son* (y); and his Friend *Lazarus* (z); by working so many miraculous Cures upon the Bodies of Men, he promoted his own success, as the Physician of their Souls, which was the principal design of all his Miracles. For, the bodily Relief which many Persons received from his hand, would naturally dispose them to give a candid attention to his healing Instructions. Besides, every such Person, was a kind of living Miracle in his Neighbourhood; a sign and a wonder amongst all his friends and acquaintance. This would naturally draw abundance of People to the famous Physician, from all quarters far and near; which gave him an opportunity to instruct great numbers at once in the Doctrine of true Religion and Salvation. To all which add, the Miracles of Christ enforced the belief of his Doctrine, in the strongest manner, being a divine testimony to his Authority, as *a Teacher come from God* (a). His Miracles were properly a double proof that he was the promised and long-expected Messiah. Because they were in themselves a seal of his divine Mission; and likewise the completion of an ancient Prophecy, (b) which foretold, that when Christ came, he should distinguish himself by such wonderful Operations. A
Prophecy,

(y) Luke vii. 12—16.

(z) John xi. 43, 44.

(a) John iii. 2.

(b) Isa. xxxv. 5, 6.

Prophecy, which the *Jews* agree with Christians in applying to the Messiah (c).

There is another circumstance relating to our Saviour's Miracles, which deserves attention. That he performed his Miracles by the *Spirit of God*, not by an evil Spirit, as his malicious Enemies wickedly pretended, evidently appears, not only from the nature of his *holy Doctrine*, as is commonly and justly observed, but likewise from the nature of his beneficial *Miracles* themselves; which were not seldom wrought in visible *opposition* to the powers of darkness. For, *he went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil* (d); either by curing them of those disorders which, like *Job's* distemper (e), were imputed to the Devil, or by delivering them from real Possessions (f). (By the way; *these things were not done in a Corner*. For, Christ went about in the most open and public manner, *doing good* by his beneficial Miracles, as well as by his salutary Instructions.) It is further observable, and worthy of special remark, that Christ conferred his miraculous Cures upon many Persons, as a Reward of their *Faith* (g). Which explains the meaning of *Matt. xiii. 58. And he did not many mighty Works there, because of their Unbelief*. And this circumstance is a further

(c) P. D. Huet. Dem. Evang. Prop. VII. Sec. 15.

(d) Acts x. 38.

(e) Job ii. 7.

(f) Matt. viii. 29. Mark i. 34. Luke viii. 31, 32.

(g) Matt. ix. 22. Mark x. 52. Luke vii. 50. xvii. 19.

ther proof of his divine Character and Mission; because Faith in an Impostor, would not have been crowned with such signal marks and tokens of the divine Favour.

But, because some Persons have objected against *one* or *two* of our Lord's Miracles, as being rather hurtful than useful; namely, *curfing the Fig-tree*, and *drowning the Herd of Swine*; it may therefore be expected, that I should say something in his Vindication, with regard to the two mentioned facts, as they stand recorded in the Gospel History.

Let it then be observed, (1.) No Persons can consistently object against any of our Saviour's Miracles, as being prejudicial in their kind, without granting that he actually did work *some* Miracles. (2.) Proper divine Miracles of any sort, are capable of answering the *chief* end of Miracles, by attesting and confirming the divine Authority of the Person, who, as God's instrument, works those Miracles; e. g. the Miracles of *Moses*, the *Plagues of Egypt*, and the terrible *Wonders in the field of Zoan* (b). (3.) Most of our Saviour's Miracles, if not all, were truly beneficial in their own nature, as well as in their benevolent design. Suppose then, for argument sake, that to shew the greatness of his Power by such a difference and variety of Operations, and to alarm a secure Generation of Men, whom milder Methods, and more gentle

(b) Psal. lxxviii. 12.

gentle Wonders, could not move or effect, so as to make any proper impression upon their Minds; suppose, I say, with this wise and friendly view, our Saviour wrought one or two Miracles of a different kind; this ought, in all reason, to be no prejudice to his Character, and much less an impeachment of his divine Authority, as the commissioned Minister and Messenger of God.

These few things premised, I proceed to observe,

(1.) With regard to the destruction of the *Herd of Swine*, this was not any of our Saviour's Miracles; for, it was not so much as his own act. He only *suffered* the thing to happen, as it did, and so was merely passive in the case. Having cured the *Demoniac* (whether one or more) he did not think fit to concern himself any further in the affair; much less was he obliged to work another Miracle, to preserve an Herd of *unclean* Cattle; the very use of which, was prohibited by the Law of *Moses*; whose Authority he might seem to have infringed by such an action, and so given his Enemies an advantage against him, to the hindrance of his Usefulness (*i*). And so, this Objection falls to the ground; and it may be hoped, will never rise more.

(2.) As

(i) See Matt. viii. 30, &c. Mark v. 9, &c. Luke viii. 30, &c. Levit. xi. 7.

(2.) As to *curfing the Fig-tree*, it plainly appears by the circumftances of the cafe, that the Fig-tree was *barren*, and fo it only ferved to *cumber the Ground*, and impoverifh the Earth, as *Fig-trees* were fupposed to do *more than other Trees (k)*. Therefore, the blafing of it, and turning it into *fire-wood*, by caufing it to *wither away*, may be confidered as a good deed, and rather beneficial than otherways. As it faved fomebody the trouble of cutting it down ; fo (which probably was the thing our Saviour had in view) it afforded a good moral inftruction, and a moft ufe-ful document to all barren, though florid, profefors of Religion, who are in danger to be *cut down as Cumberers of the Ground, and caft into the fire of Deftitution*, after the example of the unbelieving Jews. In whole unhappy cafe, the *Lord of the Vineyard came three years, seeking fruit*, but found *none*, under our Lord's Miniftry ; and he waited a fufficient time in the *fourth* year, but was ftill difappointed, as the Event fhewed (l). In relation to the Fig-tree, which our Saviour curfed, the ftory, in fhort, is this, when rightly underftood. “ And feeing a Fig-tree
“ at a diftance, bearing leaves, he came if
“ haply he might find any fruit upon it ;

(k) For which reafon, the *Athenians* planted *Fig-trees* at a greater diftance from one another, than ordinary.
 PLUTARCH. in Solon.

(l) Luke xiii. 6—9.

“ for it was not *Fig-time* ; and when he “ came, he found nothing but leaves.” It was therefore a barren Fig-tree, as I observed before (*m*). Thus then this Objection also comes to nothing.

(3.) Having considered the *salutary* Doctrine, and *healing* Miracles of Christ, let us now attend a while to his own *sound* Character, and *wholsom* Example. In reference to which, there is not the least ground or occasion to say unto him this Proverb, *Physician, heal thyself* (*n*). For, he was *the holy One, and the just* (*o*). *Who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth* (*p*). And thus, he set before others, a *wholsom* Example of all Piety, Virtue, and Goodness. It is a sufficient and satisfactory proof, that our Saviour’s *public* Character appeared to the World

(*m*) Says St. Mark, Chap. xi. Ver. 13. *And seeing a Fig-tree afar off, having leaves, he came if haply he might find any thing thereon (for the time of Figs was not yet) and when he came, he found nothing but leaves.* Where note—(1.) The *time of Figs*, or the *Fig-time*, was the time of gathering them off the trees. Matt. xxi. 33, 34. Luke xx. 10. (2.) This clause, *for the time of Figs was not yet*, assigns the reason of our Saviour’s expecting to find Figs on the tree, and not the reason of his finding none. For, (3.) these words, *and when he came, he found nothing but leaves*—should be put in a *Parenthesis*, as I have marked them, which makes all clear. We have another example of the like construction in this same Gospel. Chap. xvi. 3, 4. See Bishop KIDDER. Demonst. of the Messiah. Part. II. Chap. 2.

(*n*) Luke iv. 23.

(*o*) Acts iii. 14.

(*p*) 1 Pet. ii. 22.

World in the fairest light, when, after all that Envy and Malice could invent to defame him, his Judge pronounced him innocent, and confessedly could find in him *no fault at all* (q). If we follow him into his *private* Retirements, view him in the undress of Life, and watch his unguarded Hours, in all the freedoms of Conversation with his twelve Disciples, we shall find his behaviour to be all of a piece, uniformly wise, pious, benevolent, holy, and heavenly. By a special Providence was the false *Judas* chosen into that number, as a constant Spy upon them, that so the World might have full satisfaction, that there was no villany, trick, or deceit, carried on among them. For, if there had been any thing of that kind in our Saviour's private Intercourse with his Disciples, undoubtedly, *Judas* would have betrayed the *Secret* together with his Master. But, so far was the Traytor from making any discoveries of this nature, as that he died at once a Martyr to his own Guilt, and to his injured Master's Innocence, declaring, before he did execution upon himself, (r) *I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent Blood.*

(4.) This leads us to turn our thoughts upon the *Death* of Christ. In which important instance, by giving himself a *ransom for all* (s), he still supported his noble Character,

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ter,

(q) John xviii. 38.

(r) Matt. xxvii. 4.

(s) 1 Tim. iii. 6.

ter, as the Saviour of Sinners, and the Physician of Souls. For, says the Apostle, (t) *Who his own self bare our Sins, in his own Body on the Tree, that we being dead to Sin, should live unto Righteousness, by whose Stripes ye were healed.* I might here mention the *Piety* of our Redeemer's sufferings, as an act, or exercise of profound submission to his Father's Will (u). I might mention the *Benevolence* of his sufferings, as a shining instance of his great Love to Mankind. For, *Christ loved us, and gave himself for us, an Offering, and a Sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling Savour* (x). I might mention too, the *Freeness* of his sufferings, as he laid down his life of his own accord, not by constraint, but willingly, and out of choice (y).

I shall only insist, at present, upon the great *Condescension* of his sufferings, which justly intitled him to a glorious Reward. This matter St. Paul hath set in a strong and striking light, saying, (z) *Let this mind* (that is, this lowly mind, which he had described, and recommended before, in opposition to a spirit of vain-glory) *(a) be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God* (or, did not fondly affect, and ambitiously aspire, after divine Honours) *but (on the contrary)*
made

(t) 1 Pet. ii. 24.

(u) Luke xxii. 42.

(x) Eph. v. 2.

(y) John x. 18.

(z) Phil. ii. 5—11.

(a) Ver. 3.

made himself of no Reputation, and took upon him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of Men. And being found in fashion as a Man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name, which is above every Name, &c. And now, what more needs be said, to shew, that the Christian Name is a worthy Name, considering the Person from whom it is taken? But,

II. It will further appear to be a worthy Name, if we consider the *Occasion* upon which it was assumed. We read in the sacred History, (b) that the *Disciples were called Christians first at Antioch*. The fixing of this Name, we see, was a thing so remarkable, as that it was thought worth recording to Posterity, in the Annals of the Christian Church. And St. Luke speaks of the matter in such terms, as may imply, that the Disciples were first called Christians by a *divine Oracle* (c); or, however, that this Name was given them in a public and solemn manner. Now, upon either supposition, it is natural to think, that the Name of Christians was assigned to the Disciples of Christ, for some special and important reasons. Particularly, it may be considered, as a token of their *peculiar Relation* to Christ, as the *Head* of his

F f 3 Church;

(b) Acts xi. 26.

(c) χρηματίσαι.

Church ; as a term of *Union* amongst his Disciples and Followers ; and lastly, as a mark of *Distinction* between them and others. On all which accounts it will appear to be a *worthy Name*.

(1.) The Name of *Christians* may be considered as a token of their *peculiar Relation* to Christ, as the *Head of his Church* (d). *Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ*, said our Lord to his Apostles (e). And thus, as the Disciples of *Plato* were called *Platonists*, and the Disciples of *Pythagoras* were called *Pythagoreans*, &c ; so the Disciples of Christ were called *Christians*, after his great and exalted Name, denoting him to be their Master, and the Head of the Christian Sect. Now certainly, it is a much greater honour and happiness to have Christ for our Head and Leader, than all the Jewish Rabbies, and Gentile Philosophers put together. Let the fact speak for itself. Hath not the Gospel of Christ done more to enlighten Souls, and to reform Sinners, than all the Systems of the Schools and Synagogues ? *Where is the wise ? Where is the Scribe ? Where is the Disputer of this World ? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this World ? For, after that, in the wisdom of God, the World by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of Preaching* (to speak ironically, at the pretended wisdom of philo-

(d) Eph. i. 22. Col. i. 19.

(e) Matth. xxiii. 8.

philosophizing) *to save them that believe (f) i.e. believe in Christ crucified, the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God (g);* vastly superior to all the Wisdom of a SOCRATES, and all the Power and Vehemence of a DEMOSTHENES.

(2.) The Name of *Christians* may be looked upon as a term of *Union* among themselves. It is observable, that the City *Antioch*, where the *Disciples* were *first called Christians*, was the Metropolis of *Syria*. And there seems to have been a great mixture of believing *Jews* and *Gentiles* in that populous City. For, besides that the *Jews* were free of the City, many fled to that Place from *Jerusalem* upon the persecution which arose about *Stephen (h)*. In order therefore to cement the convert *Jews* and *Gentiles* more closely together, in one compact Body under Christ their common Head; we may well presume, it was agreed and determined to drop all former differences, all party Names and Distinctions, and so unite themselves under the general title and denomination of *Christians*. And thus, God began to call his *Servants by another Name*; as the evangelical Prophet had foretold (*i*). To the forementioned occasion and design of the Christian Name, as intended for a term of Compromise, Union, and Peace among the Followers of Christ, St. *Paul* may be understood to refer,

F f 4

when

(f) 1 Cor. i. 20, 21.

(g) Ver. 23, 24.

(h) Acts xi. 19.

(i) Isa. lxxv. 15.

when he exhorts the Christians of all Nations and Denominations, to mutual Charity, Love, and Friendship, from their common relation to Christ, saying, *(k)* *Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, Circumcision nor Uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, Bond nor Free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the Elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of Mercy, Kindness, &c.* Let any one then judge, whether the Christian Name, viewed in this useful, and lovely light, is not an honourable and *worthy Name*. For, *behold, how good, and how pleasant it is, for Brethren to dwell together in Unity (l).*

(3.) The Name of Christians may be regarded also, as a mark of *Distinction* between them and others. And in this *comparative* view, it will appear to be a *worthy Name*, especially if we consider that excellent Character to which it properly belongs (of which more under the next head) It is true, for any Persons to have only the *Name* of Christians without the *thing*, is no great honour, but on the contrary, an high disgrace. On the other hand, to be *called* a Christian, and at the same time, *be* one in reality, is the finest Character in the World. It far excels all the pomp of Heraldry, and the envied Roll of great and florid Names. This glorious Name shall be immortal in Heaven's eternal Records, when all earthly titles of distinction
are

(k) Col. iii, 11, 12.

(l) Psal. cxxxiii. 1.

are lost, and out of date ; when States and Kingdoms themselves are no more, but lie buried in the ruins of a dissolving World.— Proceed we now to observe in the last place.

III. The Christian Name is a worthy Name, considering the *Character* to which it properly belongs. In the general, as we have already seen, this Name belongs to the Disciples and Followers of Christ ; Persons who maintain his Doctrine, and profess his Religion. For, the *Disciples were called Christians*. A Name, remarkably distinguished, at the foundation of the Christian Church, by many peculiar Marks and Tokens of the divine Favour, in that great variety of spiritual Gifts, which were conferred upon the Apostles and other Christian Believers ; and which therefore still redound to the honour of the Christian Name unto this day. But passing over those extraordinary Gifts at present, I shall confine myself to the common and standing Graces and Ingredients of the Christian Character, which St. *Paul* hath briefly comprised in three words, viz. *Faith, Hope, and Charity* ; saying, (*m*) *And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three ; but the greatest of these is Charity*. These are essential, permanent, and lasting Properties of the Christian Character, now that the miraculous Gifts and Powers are ceased in the
Christian

(*m*) 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

Christian Church, as to their *Exercise*, tho' not their *Use*; which is still the same that it was at the begining, as a confirmation of the Truth and divine Authority of the Gospel.

(1.) Now, abideth *Faith*. This is one abiding quality of a Christian, and the foundation of the rest. For, by Faith here, I suppose, the Apostle means Faith in Jesus Christ; or, a firm belief of his Gospel upon the foot of its own divine Evidence and Authority, as a Revelation from God. Thus the Christian Character is a truly religious Character, including a love of sacred Truth; a disposition to enquire impartially after it; a mind open to conviction, and ready to admit all reasonable evidence of Truth, such as attends the Christian Revelation. In consequence of which good Properties, every honest Soul receives, and embraces all the great Principles of Religion, both natural and revealed (the latter implying, and supposing the former) with a full assurance of Faith. And is not this commendable and praiseworthy?

(2.) The next in order, is *Hope*; that is, the Hope of eternal Life, and a blessed Immortality, which inspires every true Believer with heroic Courage and Resolution in openly *professing* his Faith, and asserting the Cause of Christ, before the Face of the World, though a frowning World. This present World in its finest dress, in its gayest and
most

most tempting appearances, looks mean and little in a Christian's eye, when the Glories of Heaven stand full to his believing and admiring view. So that the smiles, no more than the frowns of the World, cannot make any deep impressions upon his Heart, or disturb the regular course of his Life; because *we walk by Faith, not by Sight* (n). And *having for an Helmet the Hope of Salvation* (o), the Christian's *Faith overcometh the World* (p). And is not this grand, noble, and excellent; a truly honourable and worthy Character?

(3.) The third, last and best, is *Charity*, or Love. For, the *greatest* of all is *Charity*. This is the finishing Virtue of a Christian; and so essential to the Christian Character, as that our blessed Master hath made mutual Love and Charity, the distinguishing Mark and Badge of his true and genuine Disciples. Says Christ (q) *A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you; that ye also love one another. By this shall all Men know, that ye are my Disciples, if you have* (not only *profess*, but have) *Love one to another*. Thus, the *Faith* of a Christian *works by Love* (r). And so does the *Hope* of a Christian too; for, "common Hopes create Benevolence (s)." Accordingly St. Paul exhorting Christians to the offices of Love, particularly,

(n) 2 Cor. v. 7.

(o) 1 Theff. v. 8.

(p) 1 John v. 4.

(q) John xiii. 34, 35.

(r) Gal. v. 6.

(s) APPIAN de Bel. Civil, Lib. IV.

ticularly, by *keeping the Unity of the Spirit, in the bond of Peace*, tells them amongst other motives and arguments to that purpose, *Ye are called in one Hope of your Calling* (t). But here I must observe, that though Christians are to *love as Brethren* (u), with a peculiar degree and tenderness of affection ; yet their Love is not to be contracted, or limited, wholly to themselves. For, a right Faith in the Principles of the Gospel, will inspire us with generous Sentiments of universal Benevolence. Because the Christian Revelation hath made a most glorious discovery and display of God's Love to Mankind at large. In short, the genuine fruit and effect of a Christian's Faith is Love both to God and Man. And what a Glory doth this reflect upon the Christian Character, and consequently upon the Christian Name, with which it is connected ! What a God-like form does it assume ! *Charity never faileth* ; it is the Temper of Heaven, and the Nature of God. For, *God is Love ; and he, that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him* (x).

I have now finished, what I had to propose, for setting forth the Dignity of the Christian Name in different views. And as, I suppose, we all make some Pretensions to this *worthy Name*, none of us can properly think
ourselves

(t) Eph. iy. 1—4.

(u) 1 Pet. iii. 8.

(x) 1 John iv. 6.

ourselves unconcerned in what hath been already offered to consideration, or in what I am now further to say, in some Reflections upon the whole.

(1.) From hence we may take occasion to reflect with equal wonder and concern upon the strange and fatal power of *Prejudice*. For, *that worthy Name by the which we are called*, and which we have been considering in its high dignity, hath been *blasphemed*. Astonishing to think at, and a just matter of lamentation. But so it is in fact. The *Disciples* of Christ, who *were called Christians*, had their *Name cast out as evil (y)*. Many Followers of Christ *suffered as Christians (z)*, and for no other reason, but because they were Christians. Their very Name was imputed to them as a Crime; as the Christian Apologists loudly complained. And from whence could this proceed? But from inveterate Prejudice, and blind Zeal; Prejudice against the *Truth*, which the Gospel published to the World; and a Zeal for those superstitious Errors and Corruptions in Religion, which Christianity exposed and condemned. In this instance then, we may see with pity and astonishment, the malignant Nature, and evil Tendency, of Prejudice and blind Zeal. God preserve us all from such a perverse Temper, and unhappy turn of Mind; that so we may ever lie open to Conviction,

and

(y) Luke vi. 22.

(z) 1 Pet. iv. 16.

and be ready to embrace the Truth, whenever she shews her lovely Face, and presents to our view her divine and heavenly Form.

(2.) From hence we learn, that no Christian, who deserves *that worthy Name*, can have any just cause to be *ashamed* of it, but on the contrary, he hath the highest reason to *glory* in it. For, is it any dishonour to be the Disciples of Christ, the *Son of God*, and the *Saviour of the World*? Can it be any discredit, to *distinguish* ourselves from the rest of the World, by owning such an illustrious Person for our *Master* and Lord; and by amicably *uniting* ourselves together under him, as our common Head, and the Author of the *Christian Philosophy*? Is it any disparagement to *believe* the great Principles of Religion, both natural and revealed? Is it any disgrace to maintain, at all hazards, a religious Profession, which supports itself with the blessed *Hope* of eternal Life, and a glorious Immortality? Or finally, is it any shame to *love* God, and one another, and wish well to all Mankind? Doth any body need to blush for such things as these? No, my Fellow-Christians, on the contrary, let *them* blush, let *them* be ashamed, and hang down their heads in Confusion, who can burlesque the Christian Name, and turn it into Ridicule. But, with respect to ourselves, while we pity their Presumption, let us despise their Drollery,
and

and never be laughed or bantered out of our Christian Profession, being secretly conscious, and thoroughly convinced of the real Worth and Dignity of the Christian Name.

When the famous ORIGEN cautioned his Friend against being moved with the licentious flings and witticisms of CELSUS, that great Enemy of Christianity, which he brought to the *Test of Ridicule* (a); he told him (b),
 “ St. Paul, recounting those things, which
 “ might seem to threaten a separation from
 “ Christ, and expose men to the danger of
 “ Apostacy; and having set all these dangers
 “ at open defiance, such as *tribulation and*
 “ *distress, and persecution and famine, and*
 “ *nakedness, and peril, and sword* (c), and
 “ such like things, which appeared the most
 “ formidable—it never once entred into his
 “ thoughts (said ORIGEN) to mention *Words*
 “ or Banters, as any of those terrible things.”
 —And indeed, our Christianity must hang very loose upon us, if a little profane breath can blow it away; and if we are not able to bear a little Raillery for that *worthy Name*, and glorious Cause, which so many blessed Saints
 and

(a) Note—This confutes the Suggestion of some modern Writers, viz. that Christianity was not brought to the Test of Ridicule in the primitive Times; which they suppose, would have put it to an harder Trial, than all the Persecutions which were raised against the Christian Church.

(b) ORIG. Cont. Cels. Lib. I. Page 2.

(c) Rom. viii. 35.

and Martyrs have espoused and maintained, at the expence of their Lives and Fortunes. Let us then hear, what St. *Paul* said (*d*), and adopting his words and spirit, learn to speak the same masculine Language. *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the Power of God unto Salvation, to every one that believeth.*

(3.) From what hath been said, may be further inferred, the strong Obligation which lies upon all professed Christians, to support the honour of their Profession, by a suitable Practice. For, as the Christian Name is in itself a worthy Name, it highly concerns us all to preserve its reputation in the World, by behaving ourselves as *becomes the Gospel of Christ*, and so guard against every thing which might occasion any Persons to blaspheme it. So early as the Apostle's Days, we read of Persons, who turned the *Grace of God into Wantonness*, and too many followed their pernicious ways, by reason of whom, the way of Truth was evil spoken of (*e*). These Men turned Religion into barren Speculation, and made little account of Morality and a good Life; entertaining and propagating Opinions, that were subversive of all true Piety and Virtue. And by reason of such immoral Christians, "the
" *greatest Blasphemy, or Scandal, was brought*
" *upon the Christian Name;*" as one of the
primitive

(*d*) Rom. i. 16.

(*e*) 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2. Jude, Ver. 4.

primitive Writers complains (*f*). Let us then take warning by their Example; remembring that *every one, who names the Name of Christ*, is indispensibly obliged, both for Christ's sake, and his own, and many others, whom his Example may affect, to *depart from all Iniquity, and study to adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*. May it be every one's solicitous Care, and serious constant Endeavour, to *walk worthy of God, who hath called us to his Kingdom and Glory*. Amen.

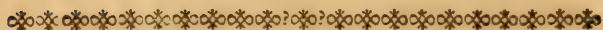
(*f*) CLEM. ALEX. Strom. Lib. III.






DISCOURSE XIX.

The Purpose of God according to Election.



ROM. ix. 11.

—*That the Purpose of God, according to Election, might stand, not of Works, but of him that calleth.*


 S these Words of St. Paul, in whose *Epistles* are *some things hard to be understood* (a), are not only liable to Misconstruction, but have been actually mistaken and misapplied upon many Occasions; I have therefore thought proper to take them into Consideration, in order to guard against those Theological Errors, which have unhappily arisen from them, and still prevail unto this Day, in the System of some Men's religious Principles and Opinions. Opinions, which they seem not to have derived from a diligent and impartial study of the

(a) 2 Pet. iii. 16.

the holy *Scriptures* themselves, but from the Writings of fallible, though pious Men, who had not attained to that exact and critical Knowledge of God's written Word, which the Labours of later Times hath produced ; and which those good Men themselves might possibly have acquired, had they lived in a more learned and enlightened Age. And as every Age ought to grow wiser than another, so for Persons to believe as their Fore-fathers believed, with an *implicit Faith*, is the same thing, in effect, with *believing as the Church believes* ; which is not acting upon a right Protestant Principle.

If we would therefore be consistent with ourselves, we must examine and judge for ourselves, by that common Rule and Standard, which God hath graciously given to the Christian Church, in his own holy and unerring Word.

For the better understanding of this divine Rule of Religion, it is highly requisite, that we read and study the sacred Writings with great Care and Attention. Particularly, we must consider every Portion and Passage of Scripture in it's proper Connexion ; that so by attending to the Scope and Design of the inspired Writers, we may be able to discover the true sense and meaning of their excellent Discourses. This accordingly is the method I intend to pursue with a scrupulous exactness, in treating of the Words before us, viz.

That the Purpose of God, according to Election, might stand, not of Works, but of him that calleth.

In order then to investigate the true Signification of these Words, and so find out what sort of an *Election* it is, that St. Paul here speaks of, let it be observed, in this Chapter he discourses on the Rejection of the *Jews*, and the Calling of the *Gentiles*. A very tender Point, which was likely to give great offence to the former. Therefore, as much as possible, to sooth their Prejudices, and conciliate their Favour, he enters upon the Subject in the most cautious manner, and with the most solemn professions of Esteem and Affection for them (*b*). In the next place he obviates a tacit Objection, and which is rather implied and supposed, than expressed, according to his cautious way of proceeding in this very nice Affair.

If, as the Apostle had hinted (and but hinted as yet) the *Jewish* Nation was now rejected from being the People and Church of God, under the Christian Dispensation, it might be objected, that the *Word of God had taken none effect*; that the Word of his Promise, to be a God to Abraham and to his Seed (*c*), had failed of it's due performance. But to this he answers, (*d*) *Not as though the Word of God had taken none effect*, In proof
of

(*b*) Ver. 1—5.

(*d*) Ver. 6,

(*c*) Gen. xvii. 7, 8.

of which assertion, he lays down a proper and plain Distinction, saying, *(e) For, they are not all Israel, that are of Israel; neither, because they are the Seed of Abraham, are they all Children.* Consequently, the *Word of God's* Promise aforesaid, might be properly fulfilled and accomplished, according to it's true purport and meaning, without including all the natural Seed of *Abraham*. This Point the Apostle proceeds to illustrate, and to support the Distinction he had laid down, by some plain instances and examples, recorded in the ancient Scriptures.

First. He mentions the Case of *Isaac* and *Ishmael*. *(f) But in Isaac shall thy Seed be called.* That is, (to apply this instance to his present purpose, as the Apostle adds) *They, which are the Children of the flesh, these are not the Children of God; but the Children of the Promise are counted for the Seed. For, this is the Word of Promise, at this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a Son (g).* Now, parallel to this well-known Case, God could fulfil his Word to *Abraham*, by raising him up a *spiritual Seed*, in the room of those that were his *Children, according to the flesh*; and so he might cast the *Jews* out of his Church, and take in the *Gentiles*, without any breach of his Promise at all. This is the Apostle's first instance; viz. that of *Isaac's*

G g 3 being

(e) Ver. 6, 7.

(f) Ver. 7—9.

(g) Gen. xviii. 10.

being chosen, exclusive of *Ishmael*, to build up the Church of God.

Secondly. Another plain and strong instance he produces in the Case of *Jacob* and *Esau*. (b) *And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one (or at once) even by our Father Isaac. (For the Children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the Purpose of God, according to Election, might stand, not of Works, but of him that calleth) it was said unto her, (i) The Elder shall serve the Younger. As it is written, (k) Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* Thus God, in his sovereign Wisdom, chose *Jacob* and his Posterity for his Church and People; at the same time rejecting *Esau*, and his Posterity, from that peculiar Honour, though equally related to *Abraham*, and as much his *Children* and *Descendants*, according to the flesh.

Upon this view of the Argument, it manifestly appears, from the Order, Scope, and Design of his Discourse, that in the Words of the Text, *St. Paul* speaks of an *absolute* unconditional *Election*; though not a *particular* Election of any Persons to eternal Life; but only a *political* Election of People to the peculiar Privileges of God's Church here upon Earth, or in this present World.

I. St.

(b) Ver. 10—13.

(i) Gen. xxv. 23.

(k) Mal. i. 2, 3.

I. *St. Paul* here evidently speaks of an absolute unconditional Election, founded solely and wholly in the sovereign Wisdom, Will, and Pleasure of God, without any regard had in the case to the Merit, or Demerit of Men. For, this very plainly appears, both from his own express Words in the Text, and likewise from the course of his Argument in the Context.

(1.) It appears with a sufficient degree of clearness from his *own express Words* in the Text; especially if we take the whole Verse together, which runs thus. *For the Children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the Purpose of God, according to Election, might stand, not of Works, but of him that calleth.* Should any one alledge, that though the Children here spoken of, viz. *Jacob and Esau*, had actually done neither good nor evil, at the time when the Preference was given to the former; yet might God chuse *Jacob*, and reject *Esau*, upon a foresight of their future Works—I say, should any one alledge *this*, it would be only *evading* the Apostle's Argument, and contradicting his positive Assertion. For, he expressly says, *not of Works*, whether past or future, *but of him that calleth.* Therefore it is manifest from his own Language, and manner of Expression, in the Words before us, that *St. Paul* here speaks of an absolute unconditional Election, founded in the mere good

Will and Pleasure of God, who hath an undoubted right to dispense his free and gratuitous Favours as he pleaseth; though in the final distribution of Rewards and Punishments, he will proceed by other Measures, and render to every Man according to his Deeds. *For, in the administration of Justice, there is no respect of Persons with God (l).*

(2.) It further appears from the *course of his Argument* in the Context. For the Apostle's design is to vindicate the Providence of God, in casting off the Body of the *Jews* from being his People, and calling, or chusing the Gentiles in their room and stead. A most tender and delicate Point, which he manages with the greatest address; proceeding by easy and gentle steps, to the main thing he had in view; which was to shew, that God in his righteous Providence had *justly* cast off his ancient People the *Jews* for the present, because of their Impenitency and Unbelief (*m*).

But this offensive Truth he forbears as yet to mention, and argues the matter upon a different Principle, viz. that upon supposition the *Jews* had done no more to *forfeit*, than the *Gentiles* had done to *merit* the peculiar Privileges of God's Church; yet, as plainly appeared by the Scripture instance of *Jacob* and *Esau*, the divine Dispensation in chusing the one, and refusing the other, could be liable

(l) Rom. ii. 11.

(m) Chap. xi. 20—22.

able to no just Exception. *That the Purpose of God, says he, according to Election, might stand, not of Works, but of him that calleth. Of him that calleth, glancing at the Calling of the Gentiles, not for any good they had done, to deserve that favour, any more than Jacob before he was born.* So says the Apostle expressly upon another occasion, speaking upon this very subject. (n) *Not by any Works of Righteousness, which we had done, but according to his Mercy he saved us, by the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the holy Ghost ; as initiated, and accepted Members of the Christian Church.* On the other hand ; if the Jews had *done no more evil, than Esau had done before he was born*, yet God, in his wise Sovereignty, might withdraw their peculiar Privileges from them, and give them away to another People, without any Injustice. This appears to be the present state of the Question.

It is true, the Argument takes a different turn afterwards ; for the Apostle proceeds, though with all possible Tenderness and Caution, to shew, that the *Jews* were justly rejected of God for their great Wickedness, whereby they had, in effect, cast off God, and his Service. For, in the sequel of his Discourse he speaks of God's Way and Method of dealing with Mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, considered as *guilty Sinners* ;

under

under which Character he had represented them all before (o). And the Point which he pursues and urges is this—That when any People have sinned against God, he may either shew them Mercy, or cast them off, as in his infinite Wisdom he sees proper. Thus for example, though he had Mercy upon the rebellious *Israelites*, yet obstinate *Pharaoh* he punished with just Severity (p).

It is in prosecution of the same Argument that he asks that Question, (q) *Hath not the Potter power over the same Clay, to make one Vessel unto Honour, and another unto Dishonour?* Alluding, I suppose, to the words of the Prophet *Jeremiah* (r), which were spoken with an eye to the moral Behaviour of the Jews; who, by their Wickedness, had put themselves, as it were, into the Hands of God's Justice, and so they lay wholly at his Mercy, to deal with as he pleased, and judged proper. The same sentiment is thus expressed by the Son of *Sirach*, (s) *As the Clay is in the Hands of the Potter, to fashion it as he pleases, so Man is in the Hands of him that made him, to render unto them according to his Judgement.*

Therefore, in this part of his Argument, the Apostle is not discoursing, as before, of
 God's

(o) Chap. iii. 23.

(p) Ver. 14—18. Exod. xxxiii. 19. ix. 16.

(q) Ver. 21.

(r) Chap. xviii. 6.

(s) Ecclus. xxxiii. 13.

God's *free Donations to Men, as having done neither good or evil*; but of his *righteous Retributions*, and his dealing with them as *Sinners*. These things then ought not to be confounded, as perhaps too commonly they are; and *this* hath proved the occasion of Persons committing great Mistakes about St. Paul's meaning; as if he represented the Deity dispensing *Rewards and Punishments* without regard to moral Characters; and so, making some Persons, *Vessels of Wrath*, and others, *Vessels of Mercy*, irrespectively to their *having done either good or evil*. I say, such Mistakes as these, have arisen from want of attention to the Process of the Apostle's Argument, and not properly distinguishing the different parts and steps of it in their just order and connexion. The Consequence of which hath been, that what was spoken in one view, hath been unhappily mistaken, and misunderstood in another; by which means, not only the Beauty of his Discourse is lost to common Readers, but also his true Sentiments are overlooked and confounded.

The Sum then of the matter, in short, is *this*—God's free Donations are *absolute and unconditional*; but Rewards and Punishments are *conditional*, depending upon Men's moral Character and Behaviour. Now, it is the *former* that the Apostle speaks of in the Text; and the first step of his Argument agrees thereunto; though, as hath been shew-
ed,

ed; his Discourse afterwards takes another turn, and proceeds to a new Topic. Therefore, it evidently appears from the *Course of his Argument*, as well as from his *express Words* in the Text, that St. Paul here speaks of an *absolute unconditional Election*; founded solely and wholly in the sovereign Wisdom, and Will, and Pleasure of God, without any regard had in the case to the Merit, or Demerit of Men. I proceed now to shew,

II. This is not a *particular Election*, of any Persons to eternal Life; but only a *political Election* of People to the peculiar Privileges of God's Church here upon Earth, or in this present World.

(1.) I maintain, that the Election, here spoken of, is not a *particular Election* of any Persons to eternal Life. And in proof of this assertion, it might suffice, to insist upon what hath been already said, to shew that the Text speaks of an *absolute unconditional Election*. For this one Argument fully evinces, that it is not a particular Election of any Persons to eternal Life. Because Election to eternal Life, is, and must be conditional; as both Scripture and Reason assure us.

Reason tells us, that without Holiness there can be no Happiness. Nor is it consistent with the moral Character of the Deity, but repugnant to his known Perfections, to act arbitrarily in the final determination of Men's Condition.

Condition. For, as he hath made us moral Agents, and accountable Creatures, his Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness require him, to call us to a fair account, and to dispense Rewards and Punishments, with an impartial Hand. It is true; when the rational Creatures of God have sinned against him, and so put themselves into the *Hands of his Justice*, they are like the *Clay in the Hands of the Potter*, and by an act of divine Prerogative, he may suspend, or inflict any deserved Punishments. But to suppose that God can doom any Man, or number of Men, to *eternal Death* and Destruction, without any Fault of theirs, and *before they have done any good, or evil*; such a Notion is alike shocking to common Sense, and contrary to the Principles of common Equity; it is a Notion no less dishonourable to God, than uncomfortable and confounding to Man. Therefore, on the other hand, there can be no such thing as *absolute unconditional* Election of any Persons, capable of moral Agency, to eternal Life. For, those who maintain this latter Opinion, acknowledge, that it cannot be supported without the former (*t*). But as the former Notion is quite untenable, the latter must be given up by their own Confession. Consequently, it is not a particular Election of any Persons to eternal Life, that is meant in the Text; for
it

(*t*) Vid. J. CALVIN. Epist. & Respons. Pag. 105.

it speaks of an *absolute* Election, as hath been shewed before. Election to eternal Life, is, and must be *conditional*; as plain Sense and Reason tells us.

The truth of this Observation will be further evident, if we attend to the plain and exprefs declarations of God's holy Word. Nothing is there delivered in clearer and stronger terms, than this great Truth, that *God is no Respector of Persons* (u). With infinite variety he may dispense his free and gratuitous Favours as he pleases; but in the final distribution of Justice, he will *render unto every Man according to his Deeds* (x). Therefore, though the former *times of Ignorance* God winked at, he now commandeth all Men *every where to Repent*; because he hath appointed a Day, in which he will judge the World *in Righteousness*, by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given Assurance unto all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead (y). It is, I confess, a great Privilege to the World of Mankind, that *Jesus, the Mediator of the new Covenant* (z), is appointed to be our common Judge. For, according to this divine Constitution, we must all be judged by a *Law of Grace*. And so we have comfortable ground to expect, that all
reasonable

(u) Rom. ii. 11. Acts x. 34. Gal. ii. 6. 1 Pet. i. 17, &c.

(x) Rom. ii. 6—11.

(y) Acts xvii. 30, 31.

(z) Heb. xii. 24.

reasonable and proper Allowances will be made for human Frailty and Imperfection, in the proceedings of the last Judgement. If all Mankind will be considered and treated, more or less, as guilty Sinners ; yet a great and visible Distinction will be made between the *penitent*, and the *impenitent*. Because the former will be *Vessels of Mercy*, and the latter *Vessels of Wrath, fitted to Destruction*. Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ, the kind Saviour, and compassionate Friend of perishing Sinners, will *judge the World in Righteousness*, by deputation from his Father, and pronounce every Man's Sentence with impartial Equity. *For, we must all appear before the Judgement-Seat of Christ ; that every Man may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done* (i. e. in the present Life) *whether it be good or bad* (a). And, what will be the Consequence and Result of that *eternal Judgement* (b), from which there lies no Appeal? The Judge himself hath solemnly declared, what the Consequence will be, with respect both to the righteous, and the wicked. (c) *And these shall go away into Everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life Eternal*. Thus, you see, though *Eternal Life is the Gift of God, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ* (d), it is however an *honourary Gift*, which will be conferred upon those brave, and worthy Persons, who
have

(a) 2 Cor. v. 10.

(b) Heb. vi. 2.

(c) Matt. xxv. 46.

(d) Rom. vi. 23.

have acquitted themselves well in the *Christian Warfare*.

Upon the whole then, it is manifest, both from the dictates of *Reason*, and the Doctrines of *divine Revelation*, that Election to eternal Life is suspended upon certain Conditions, which must be complied with, as the necessary Terms of our final Acceptance with God.

Therefore, in the Words of the Text, which, as we have seen before, speaks of an *absolute unconditional* Election, cannot be meant a particular Election of any Persons to eternal Life. Which was the thing to be proved.

The Question then is this—What Kind of Election is it, that St. *Paul* does intend (when he says, *That the Purpose of God, according to Election, might stand, not of Works, but of him that calleth*)? To which I answer.

(2.) It is a *political* Election of People to the peculiar Privileges of God's Church here upon Earth, or in this present World. The truth of this Observation will manifestly appear to any one, that considers, with the least attention, what the Apostle hath said, to illustrate and confirm his own meaning in the Text.

In the first place, he refers us to what the *Scripture* says concerning *Jacob and Esau*, before they were born, and had done neither good

or

or evil (e). *It was said unto her (i. e. Rebecca) The Elder shall serve the Younger.* Turn now to the History here referred unto. (f) *And the Lord said unto her, two Nations are in thy Womb, and two manner of People shall be separated from thy Bowels; and the one People shall be stronger than the other People, and the Elder shall serve the Younger.* Observe, I beseech you, what is here said of *Jacob and Esau* (to whose Case the Words of the Text have a direct reference) was spoken not merely of their own *Persons*, but of their *Posterity*, and of the two different People, or Nations, that should descend from them both respectively. Therefore it is a *national* or *political* Election to certain Privileges, and peculiar Advantages in this World, that the Apostle intends. For, *as the Elder's serving the Younger*, could have no relation at all to a *future State*, so in fact, it was only in the *Posterity of Jacob and Esau*, that the Elder did serve the Younger.

The Apostle, in the next place, refers to what the *Scripture* says of these two Persons *long after they were born.* (g) *As it is written, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated.* Here we have a plain reference to the following Passage. (h) *I have loved you, saith the Lord; yet ye say, wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's Brother?*

(e) Ver. 10.

(f) Gen. xxv. 23.

(g) Ver. 13.

(h) Mal. i. 2, 3.

saieth the Lord. Yet I loved Jacob, and hated Esau, and laid his Mountains and his Heritage waste, for the Dragons of the Wilderness. Can any thing in the World be plainer than this, that God's loving Jacob, and hating Esau, is spoken with a view to their Posterity, and the Preference he gave to that of Jacob?

And what was this Preference? Why surely, not an Election to eternal Life! For, neither was *Jacob* and all his Posterity elected to eternal Life; nor was *Esau* and all his Posterity reprobated and doomed to eternal Destruction. But therefore it was, without all Controversy, an Election of that People, to the peculiar Privileges of God's Church in *this* World; particularly, such Privileges as he had enumerated before in these Terms. (i) *Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promises; whose are the Fathers, and of whom, as concerning the Flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.* These were great and distinguishing Privileges, to which the Posterity of *Jacob* were *elected*; and hence they are called a *chosen People*. But their Election to eternal Life depended, as *that* of any other People must do, upon the due Improvement of their religious Advantages, and a persevering Fidelity in the Service of God.

I con-

I conclude this Discourse with some Inferences and Reflections.

(1.) God's absolute Purposes are *unchangeable*. *That the Purpose of God, according to Election, might stand. The Counsel of the Lord standeth for ever; the Thoughts of his Heart to all Generations (k).* This consideration may justly inspire us all with the most profound Reverence of the divine Sovereignty. *Let all the Earth fear the Lord; let all the Inhabitants of the World stand in Awe of him (l).* But let us not indulge a slavish Fear, or such a terrifying Dread of the divine Majesty, as only tends to distract and distress, to amaze and confound our Minds. For, *as is his Majesty, so is his Mercy*. Infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, in conjunction, preside over the Universe. And thus the supreme Ruler of the World, is always pursuing the best and most benevolent designs, by the wisest and fittest measures, with a strong and steady Hand (m).

(2.) Groundless is the vulgar Doctrine of
H h 2 absolute

(k) Pſal. xxxiii. 11.

(1) Ver. 8.

(m) Note—With a view to the *Unchangeableness* of God's absolute Purposes, we may understand what the Apostle says. Chap. xi. 29. *For the Gifts and Calling of God are without Repentance.* And this may explain, by way of parallel, what is said of *Eſau*, whom the *immutable* Purpose of God, according to Election, excluded from the *Blessing*, which was given to *Jacob* by an irrevocable Grant. Heb. xii. 17. *He found no Place of Repentance.* See Gen. xxvii. 33.

absolute Election. For, it hath no foundation in this Text, which hath been commonly thought the most favourable to it; nor consequently in any other. It is true; the Words do speak of an *absolute Election*, but not in the vulgar notion of the thing; as hath, I think, been clearly and fully shewn, beyond all possible Contradiction. Therefore let us conform our Sentiments in this matter, as well as in all other points, to the Word of God, and not to the Writings of frail and fallible Men; that so we may always entertain wise, worthy, and just Conceptions of the divine Administration. For, it is not a matter of mere Speculation, but what hath a practical Use and Efficacy, to influence and form our own moral Tempers and Dispositions.

And though I will not deny, that some *good*, as well as bad Men, have fallen into a great and grievous Error upon this head; I am persuaded, they might have been better Men still, if they had thought more justly upon the important Subject. Because this might have enlarged their views of the *divine Goodness*, and thereby improved themselves more in the divine Image and Likeness. It might have nourished in their Souls that divine Principle of universal Benevolence, which is the best ornament of a Man, the brightest glory of a Christian, and the most amiable *beauty of God himself*. *How great is his Goodness!*

ness! And how great is his Beauty! As the Prophet expresses himself, in a pious rapture of Admiration (*n*). In a word; Religion will resemble it's Object; and according to the Idea that any one forms of God's Nature and Government, such will his own Temper and Spirit most naturally be. Thus, narrow Notions are apt to produce contracted Affections; whereas, on the other hand, great and generous Sentiments have a more happy influence, and a better effect upon the moral Dispositions. And how much more excellent Christians, would many pious People be, at this very Day, if they were less uncharitable, and less conceited, and had more of a catholic Spirit.

(3.) Eternal Salvation is not wholly limited and confined to the *visible Church*. Upon the contrary supposition, for Persons to be elected to the Privileges of God's Church, would differ little from their being elected to eternal Life and Salvation. But the two Cases are widely different from each other. For, many that are called and chosen into God's visible Church, here upon Earth, are never likely to see his face in Heaven. And so, on the other hand, there is good ground and reason to believe, that many Persons, *without* the Pale of the visible Church, may be *within* the compass of divine Mercy. For, what rational account can be given, why the *want*

H h 3

of

of special Privileges should debar some Men from Salvation, any more than the mere enjoyment of such Privileges can insure it to others? Therefore I conclude, that though the visible Church is favoured with the richest Means of Religion, and the most valuable number of improveable Talents, yet Salvation is not wholly limited, or confined to it.

This Consideration hath it's use and importance, as it may help to clear up the face of the divine Dispensations, and lead us to admire the *manifold Wisdom*, and *Grace* of God, in exhibiting the Means of Virtue and Happiness, in such various degrees and proportions, to the children of Men. To some is given *one Talent*; suppose by the *light of Nature*; to others, v. g. the *Jews*, are given *two Talents*; and to Christians, it may be allowed, are given *five Talents*; to every one according to his *several ability* (o). Which implies a Capacity in the Receiver, to make some good use and improvement of his Talents, be they more or less. This leads me to observe,

(4.) Great *Thankfulness* and *Fruitfulness* God justly expects from his own professing Church and People. For, as all their peculiar and distinguishing Advantages for Religion, are his own free Gift, so it is only by making the proper use of these things, that any Persons can secure his final Approbation.

The

(o) Matt. xxv. 15.

The truth is, God would have us all to be happy. *For he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance;* (p) practise Holiness, and inherit Heaven. Therefore, the only way to please him, and obtain his Favour, is, with his gracious assistance, to qualify ourselves for being happy, by a due improvement of our religious Privileges, and a right application of our rational and moral Powers.

Since then, the *divine Power hath given unto us all things, that pertain unto Life and Godliness, through the Knowledge of him, who hath called us to Glory and Virtue;* since we are called and chosen into the *militant Church of Christ*, let us endeavour to be *faithful*, and so give *Diligence to confirm our Calling and Election*, by walking worthy of God, who hath called us to his Kingdom and Glory.

(p) 2 Pet. iii. 9.



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T H E

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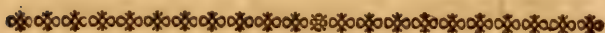
O R, A

CRITICAL and PRACTICAL

DISCOURSE

Of making

Our *Calling* and *Election* sure.



Πολλὰ γὰρ πολλοῖς λέλεκται.
 ΝΕΑΡΑ δ' ἐξευρόντα σαφὴ δόμεναι
 βασάνῳ ἐς ἔλεγχον, πᾶς γε κίνδυνος,
 ὅσον φθονεροῖσιν.
 Ἄπτεται δ' ἐσλῶν αἰεὶ,
 χεῖρόνεας δ' οὐκ ἐρίζει.

PINDAR. Nem. Od. 8.

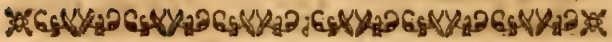
Quid ergo? Non ibo per priorum vestigia? Ego vero utar via veteri; sed si propiorem, planioremque invenero, hanc muniam. Qui ante nos ista moverunt, non domini nostri, sed duces sunt. Patet omnibus Veritas, nondum est occupata; multum ex illa etiam futuris relictum.

SENECA. Ep. 33.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Discourse first made it's public Appearance in 1742. when a few Copies only were printed, and the whole Impression went off in a short time. And, as much Enquiry hath been after it for so many Years past, it was therefore thought proper, in Compliance with the earnest desire of some respectable Persons, among the Subscribers, to give it here a second Impression, a little corrected.





DISCOURSE XX.

Of making our Calling and Election
sure.



2 PET. i. 10, 11.

Wherefore the rather, Brethren, give Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure; for if you do these things, you shall never fall. For so an Entrance shall be ministred unto you abundantly, into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

*** F the Design of Revelation be,
* I * as I suppose it is, to relieve the
* Weakness, and to rectify the A-
*** buses of human Reason; it is
highly proper, that the divine Oracles should
be delivered in a plain and popular Style, not
in a philosophic Language; that so the mean-
est Capacity might be able to comprehend,
with ease, the great Principles, Duties, and
Motives of Religion. But, because the pe-
culiar

culiar idioms of Speech are subject to vary, almost in every Age, as well as in every Nation, it is therefore impossible, that the same Style and Diction can suit alike, all Times and Places. There is nothing, *e. g.* which contributes more to the ornament and popularity of Style, than apt Similitudes, lively Metaphors, and pertinent Allusions to known Rites and Customs (*a*). But whatever elegance or perspicuity, there might be, in such Forms and Modes of Speech, as they were first used and applied; all the beauty and force of the Expression, will be lost to those Persons, who do not observe the true point of Comparison, nor attend to those particular Objects, which gave occasion to that sort of Phraseology. Nor is this all; when People have once overlooked the true Sentiment, they are liable to affix wrong Ideas to Words, whereby they commit very great Mistakes, in the understanding of ancient Writers. If the *holy Scriptures* themselves, be not exempt from this Inconvenience, we have no cause to wonder at it, much less any reason to object against the *sacred* Style, upon this account. It cannot otherways be, without a Miracle, but that the Language of *Scripture*, how plain and popular

(*a*) Hence so much is said by the *Critics*, concerning the proper use of these Tropes. ARISTOT. de Rhetor. Lib. III. Cap. 2. and de Art. Poetic. Cap. 21. LONGIN. de Sublim. Sect. 32. TULLY de Orat. Lib. III. QUINTIL. Instit. Lib. VIII. Cap. 6.

popular soever it was, in its original structure and composition, must be attended with some Obscurities, to common Readers, especially, at this distance of Time and Place, from the grand scene of Action, And for any one to make this an Objection against the *sacred Writings*, is contrary to all Sense and Reason.

This being premised, in order to prepare the way for what I have to offer from the Words of the *Apostle*, which are pitched upon for the Subject of the ensuing Discourse; I proceed to observe, that their Connexion with the Context is plain and obvious. At the third Verse, St. *Peter* reminds *Christians*, of the high Privileges they enjoyed, under the Gospel; *namely*, that God has given us all things, which pertain to Life and Godliness, through the Knowledge of him, who hath called us to Glory and Virtue. Under these advantageous Circumstances, the *Apostle* recommends, in the next place, a suitable Conduct, and a Behaviour answerable to such gospel Benefits. And so, in this view, the Words before us are ushered in, by way of *Inference*. *Wherefore the rather, Brethren, give Diligence, &c.*

Now, in this passage of Scripture, there are two things which demand our Attention.

First. The great Duty enjoined, viz. to give Diligence to make our Calling and Election sure, or firm.

Secondly.

Secondly. The Argument, or Motive, with which it is enforced. *For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an Entrance, &c.*

First. Let us consider the Nature of the Duty, and what the Apostle may be supposed to intend by, *giving Diligence to make our Calling and Election sure*, or firm. To this end it will be proper to enquire distinctly into three Particulars. 1. What we are to understand by *Calling* and *Election*. 2. What is meant by *making* our Calling and Election *sure*, or firm. 3. What is implied in *giving Diligence* to make our *Calling* and *Election* *sure*, or firm.

I. Let us enquire, what we are to understand by *Calling* and *Election*. A just explication of these Terms may give some light, both to this, and other passages of Scripture, which have a near Affinity with it. I shall, therefore, endeavour to clear up the Words from that Cloud of Obscurity, which seems to have darkened their Sense, and concealed their true Meaning, from the generality of Readers, not to say Writers too. But should I happen to suggest a Notion, which may appear to any Persons to be wholly new; I hope none will be so rash as to reject it purely upon that account. Let what I have to offer in support of it, be considered with Candor; and then form an impartial Judgement; if an impartial Judgement may be formed,

formed, where contrary Prejudices have been deeply imbibed and long retained.

Now, my Notion of the matter is this ; the Terms *Calling* and *Election* are figurative Expressions; alluding, I suppose, here, to *military* affairs, according to the *ancient Roman* Discipline. And that there should be some Allusions in the New Testament, to the *military* Customs of the *Romans*, will not be thought incredible, by any one, who considers, on the one hand, the extensive Design of the *sacred* Writings, especially the *General Epistles* ; and, on the other hand, the large Dimensions of the *Roman Empire*, in those Days ; or how far that victorious People had carried their Arms and Conquests ; an account whereof may be seen in APPIAN (*b*). Now the Custom was among the *ancient Romans* and their Allies (to say nothing at present of what was practised by the *Greeks*) (*c*). When Forces were to be raised, I say, it was the Custom, to *call* together by a public Summons, all that were capable of bearing Arms, and who were obliged thereupon to appear ; and then, the Officers appointed for the purpose, *chose* out proper Persons for the Service, and dismissed the rest. So that upon these Occasions, you will observe, there was.

(*b*) Prefat. ad Hist. Rom.

(*c*) See Archbishop POTTER's Antiq. of Greece, Book III. Chap. 2.

was a *Call* given, and an *Election* or *Choice* made, in consequence of that *Call*.

This method of proceeding, in that Case, is clearly described by POLYBIUS; who tells us that it was practised *every Year* (*d*). But there be also frequent References to the same Usage in other ancient Writers. DIONYSIUS of *Halicarn* saith, “The Consuls proposing “a Levy, *called* all the Citizens to Arms (*e*).” APPIAN, speaking of new-raised Men, calls them *new-elected* (*f*). In the *Latin* Authors, the like Phrases occur. Thus we read, in TACITUS, *electd Forces* (*g*). And again, *electd*, or chosen, *Auxiliaries* (*h*). So likewise, in VIRGIL, Youth chosen for War (*i*), with other Passages to the same effect. Hence also that Remark of SENECA, the Philosopher, “Those whom the Camp receives to “toil and danger, it *chooseth* with the utmost “Nicety (*k*).” The Custom aforesaid having given occasion to these Forms of Speech, and brought them into common use; no wonder

(*d*) Vid. POLYB. Lib. VI. Pag. 466. 7, 8. Edit. ISAAC CASAUB.

(*e*) Οἱ δὲ ὕπατοι στρατολογίαν προδέντες ἐκάλουν τοὺς πολίτας ἀπαντας ἐπὶ τὰ ὅπλα. Antiq. Lib. x. Pag. 492. Edit. ROB. STEPH.

(*f*) Κί ὁ στρατὸς ἦν αὐτῷ χωρὶς γε τῶν νεολέγων τρεῖς τέλη, &c. De Bell. Civil. Lib. III.

(*g*) Exercitus electi. Hist. Lib. I.

(*h*) Electis auxiliis. Hist. Lib. II.

(*i*) Bello lecta Juventus. Æneid. Lib. VIII.

(*k*) Castra quoque quos ad laborem & periculum recipiunt fastidiose legunt. Epist. 44.

wonder if they came to be sometimes applied to other matters. TACITUS, speaking of the Accession of one of the *Roman Emperors*, observeth—" Things were so ordered, that he
 " might rather seem to be *called*, and *chosen*,
 " by the Common-Wealth (l)." And to come now to the *sacred Writers*. That proverbial Saying, used by our *Saviour*, *Many are called, but few chosen* (m), had its rise, probably, from the same Custom (n). And hath not St. *Paul* a visible Reference to the same thing in the following Passage? " No
 " Man that wareth entangleth himself with
 " the affairs of this Life, that he may please
 " him, who hath *chosen* him to be a Soldi-
 " er (o)." But nothing can be more full to our Purpose, than that remarkable Passage in the Book of *Revelation*, where a War is mentioned, as depending between Christ and his Enemies. " These shall make War with
 " the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome
 " them; for he is Lord of Lords, and King
 " of Kings; and they that are with him,
 " that is to say, *his Soldiers* (p), *are called*,
 " and

(l) Ut vocatus electusque potius a Republica videretur.
 Annal. Lib. I.

(m) Matt. xx. 16.

(n) See LE CLERC's Supplement in loc.

(o) 2 Tim. ii. 4.

(p) In this Sense the Phrase *οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ* is used by St. *Matthew*, Chap. xxvii. Ver. 54. and, likewise, by other Writers. *Απομαρτυροῦντες ἡ οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ*. HERODOT.
 I i Calliop.

“ *and chosen, and faithful (q).*” Here we have three distinct Terms, which manifestly allude to the *military* Life and Character. For to be *called* and *chosen*, plainly refer to the way and manner of entring into the Army; and to be *faithful*, respects the Soldier’s conduct afterwards, in keeping his military Oath; and this may be the same thing that the Apostle *Peter* intends, by making our *Calling* and *Election* sure, or firm; of which more hereafter.

Having now endeavoured to account for these figurative Expressions, *Calling* and *Election*, I proceed to consider the proper Meaning of these Terms, distinctly, as applied to the *Christian* Character.

1. Our *Calling* signifies the public divine Call, which is given us in, or by, the Gospel of *Christ*, to engage in the *spiritual Warfare*. But the Notion of *Warfare*, implies a state of Hostility. In order, therefore, to form a just Idea of this matter, it will be proper to take a general survey of Mankind, as Creatures under a Revolt and Apostasy from God.

Where this *Apostasy* began, I need not say; and by what Means, or by whose Instrumentality it was introduced, is no less evident, from the *Scripture* account of *Man’s Fall*.

Calliop. Τοῖς μετ’ αὐτοῦ πρὸς μάχην παρήγγειλε. POLY-
ÆN. Stratag. Lib. I. Cap. 38.

(q) Rev. xvii. 14.

Fall. Now, from that time to this, there hath been a constant opposition maintained and carried on, between the Kingdom of God, and the Tyranny of the Devil. *Satan* obtained a great advantage over Mankind, by soliciting and procuring their first Apostasy; whereby they forfeited the privilege of Immortality, incurred the penalty of Death, and lost all hopes of Happiness in this World, without any prospect of a better. Now, where there is no prospect of Happiness, there can be no *sufficient* Motives to Holiness, to any Creatures; consequently, in the state of lapsed Nature, the interest of *Religion* must have languished and died of Course, without some Expedient, to remove the Penalty due to Sin, and to put Mankind upon a new Trial. But,

It pleased God, in his great Compassion to the fallen Race, to provide timely Relief, in that most antient Promise of a Redeemer; viz. *That the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's Head (s)*—should defeat his policy, and destroy his power and influence in the World. But the Serpent was to *bruise his Heel*; importing, that *Christ* was to suffer Death, that he might redeem us from it (t).

I i 2

Accord-

(s) Gen. iii. 15.

(t) This will appear to be the beautiful Sense of that famous Prediction, if it be considered, that the Heel is the part, where *Serpents* usually wound and kill. See *Gen.*

Accordingly so he did. *For this Purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the Works of the Devil (u). That through Death, he might destroy him, who had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil, (who not only introduced Death into the World (x), but served his own interests by it) and deliver them, who through Fear of Death were all their Life-time subject to Bondage (y). That he might, in a word, recover Sinners from the common Apostasy, and reconcile them to the practice of religious Virtue, by the blessed Hope of eternal Life, and a glorious Immortality, in a future state of happy Existence.*

And now, that our *Lord Jesus Christ hath abolished Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light, through the Gospel (z);* since he is risen and ascended on high, as the *Lord of Glory, as the Prince of Life, the Captain-general of Life (a), and Immortality—if I may use the Expression.* Behold, the Gospel Summons is sent abroad, *calling upon us to attend, and follow our heavenly Leader and Commander, to engage in his glorious Cause,*

*Gen. xlix. 12. I think the following Passage is a better Comment upon it than some modern Glosses.—*Ἐχίς κτενεῖ πατάσας πλείονα ἀγρίω βέλει. *LYCOPHRON. Cal- sand. P. 60. edit. Potter.*

(u) 1 John iii. 8.

(x) See Mr. PIERCE in loc.

(y) Heb. ii. 14, 15.

(z) 2 Tim. i. 10.

(a) Ἀρχηγὸν τῆς ζωῆς, Acts iii. 15.

Cause, and to fight manfully under his Banner, against Sin, the World, and the Devil. This is the *High Calling of God in Christ Jesus (b)*, by whom we are called to *Glory and Virtue*.

With relation to the Truth and Validity of this *Call*, it is attended with all proper evidence of a divine Authority. Therefore indispensable is the obligation we lie under, to obey the Summons; and so, in this Respect, the Parallel holds good, between the *Roman Discipline*, and the *Christian Dispensation*. Because the bright Evidence, which attends the Gospel, proves its Truth and Authority, as a Revelation from God, even to a *Demonstration*; the Demonstration of the *Spirit and of Power (c)*. Under this Notion then, all honest, well-disposed Minds, all unprejudiced and impartial Enquirers after Truth, will receive and embrace it; and so comply

I i 3

with

(b) Philip. iii. 14.

(c) 1 Cor. ii. 4. That this is the proper meaning of the Word Ἀποδείξις; that signifies not merely the *Manifestation* of a thing, which is more properly expressed by φανέρωσις, 1 Cor. xii. 7. but a *Demonstration* in the way of Argument, appears by that Remark of CICERO; *Argumenti conclusio, quæ est Græce Ἀποδείξις, ita definitur*; “Ratio, quæ, ex rebus perceptis, ad id, quod non percipiebatur, adducit.” *Academ. Quest. Lib. II.* In this Sense, I suppose, the Word is used in the following Passage; Ὅσοις δὲ νεωτέροις ἐνετύγχανε καὶ δυναμένοις ποιεῖν καὶ μαρτυρεῖν, τοῖς τοιούτοις δὲ ἀποδείξεως, καὶ τῶν μαθημάτων ἐνετύγχανε. IAMBlich, de Vita PYTHAG. Cap. XVIII.

with the Gospel Call, and obey the divine Summons. Accordingly, before we dismiss this Particular, let it be observed, that our *Calling* may often signify the *Gospel-Call*, not merely as given, but as complied with, and accepted. *You see your Calling, Brethren*, saith the *Apostle*, (describing the Quality of the Persons, who had actually embraced the Gospel Call) *how that not many wise Men after the Flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called (d), &c.* It is well observed, by CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, “ That whereas all
 “ Men were *called*, those that were willing
 “ to obey, were named *the called (e)*; for,
 “ as he adds, there is no Unrighteousness
 “ with God (f):” which Remark obviates the Cavil of CELSUS, viz. that, *if all Men were Sinners, all should have been called (g).*

2. Let us now enquire, what we are to understand by *Election*. This Term hath had such an Idea annexed to it in *Theology*, by common Use and Custom, that I question very much, whether any other Notion will gain admittance with some People. There seems, indeed, to be a kind of Charm in the very Sound of the Word, which wonderfully enchants the Imagination, transports the
 Mind,

(d) 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28.

(e) Κλητοὶ ὀνομαθήσαν.

(f) STROM. Lib. I.

(g) Vid. ORIG. contra Cels. Lib. III. P. 150. Edit. SPENCER.

Mind, I know not whither, and carries it forth into all the mysterious Depths of *Predestination*; so that wherever, almost, the Word occurs, it is apt to be applied, that way, by Persons inured to a particular Mode of thinking. But, surely, this must be running into an Extreme, at least; and whatever construction may be put upon the Word in other Places, the Passage before us requires a different Sense, because the Apostle here speaks of making our *Calling* and *Election* sure.

Can the *Decrees of God* be made surer by us, than they are in themselves? Some Persons, I confess, by making our *Election* sure, understand making it sure to ourselves, as they express it; that is, as they explain it, evidencing our *Election* by our *Calling*. But then, by this turn of the Words, they give us no account how we must evidence our *Calling*, and make *that* sure; whereas the Apostle exhorts us to make our *Calling* sure, as well as our *Election*; and therefore such a Construction must be put upon the Phrase, as will be alike applicable to both Cases. Besides, the Word, in the Original, doth not properly signify *evidence*; but such a *ratification*, *firmness*, and *stability* of any matter, which causeth it to take effect, and to answer it's true End and Design. To all which, let me add; the Nature of the Allusion, couched in the Apostle's Words, obligeth us

to put another Sense, than the commonly received one, upon the Term *Election*; as it is here used and applied. And so what *an old Expositor* hath remarked upon that parallel place, *Rev. xvii. 14.* is applicable, I think, to the Passage before us, *namely*, “ That *eternal Election* is not here meant, but that which *follows* upon *Vocation*; whereby we are separated from the Crowd of Sinners, through Sanctification (*b*).”

In order to clear up this matter a little further, let us recollect what hath been said before, concerning the *military* Custom, supposed to be referred to. When Forces were to be raised, all the Men capable of bearing Arms were *called* together, by a public Summons. Now to *these* answer all those Persons, who hear the Gospel *Call*; but more especially those that give a proper Attention to it, and so are *the called*, as we have already observed. But then, further; out of the Number of them that were summoned, and thereupon made their Appearance, proper Persons were *selected*, and *chosen* for *military* Service. In like manner, all that appeared to be duly qualified, and discovered a proper Disposition for the Service of Christ (*i*), by believing and obeying the Gospel *Call*, were *chosen*, *elect*ed, or, as it were, enlisted into the

(*b*) Vid. POOL's Synops. in loc.

(*i*) But some were better disposed for it than others, See Mr. LOCKE's Note on Rom. ii. 6.

the *spiritual* Warfare, according to the Method which God had appointed in that Case; particularly by the Christian Sacrament of *Baptism*, to which the *Apostle* seems to refer, in the preceding Verse (*k*). Therefore *Election*, considered in this view, plainly signifies our *Admission into the Church Militant*, according to the divine Order and Appointment; or, in other words, our being received of God, as his professed People (*l*).

I shall

(*k*) Ver. 7. of this Chapter.

(*l*) If this shall appear to any an harsh Construction, I desire it may be considered how often the professed People of God are stiled his *chosen* People, both in the *Jewish* and *Christian* Church. To give an instance in each. *Deut.* vii. 6. "The Lord thy God hath *chosen* thee, to be a special People unto himself." The *Jewish* Nation might be called a *chosen* People, even in a *military* Sense, as they were God's *Militia*, [See Mr. LOWMAN'S Answer to the *Moral Philosopher*.] to fight his Battles, to assert the cause of Truth, and maintain the true Religion, against Idolaters. Compare Ver. 5. of the same Chapter, with *Psal.* lx. 4. "Thou hast given a Banner to them that fear thee; that it might be displayed because of the Truth." With relation to the *Christian* Church, the *Apostle Peter*, adopting the language of *Moses*, observes; *1 Pet.* ii. 9. "But ye are a *chosen* Generation, a royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, a *peculiar* People; that ye should shew forth the Praises (or Virtues) of him who hath called you out of Darkness, into his marvelous Light." In this fine Passage, the *Apostle* specifies the great End and Design of *Christians* being called and *chosen* into the visible Church of God, viz. that they might shew forth his Virtues, τὰς ἀρετὰς, which is also a military Term, importing martial Exploits. Τάξεις, ἀρετὰς, ὀπλίσεις ἀνδρῶν.

ARISTOPH.

I shall conclude this Enquiry concerning our *Calling* and *Election*, with observing, that

ARISTOPH. *Ranæ*. Act. IV. Scen. 2. Ὅπως ἐν ζήλωσιν τετὰς τῶν ἀρχαίων ἀρετὰς καὶ νίκας, αὐτὰ δέξει τὰ σπασυγήματα. POLYÆN. *Stratagem*. Lib. V. Proæm.—I doubt not but some other Passages of *Scripture*, which may be thought to point another way, would appear, upon a close Examination, to admit the same Construction.

For a Specimen of the rest, let the following Texts be considered. 1 *Thess.* i. 4. *Knowing, Brethren, beloved, your Election of God.* In which Passage may be observed, 1. The proper End and Design of Persons being chosen into the Christian Church, viz. *Salvation*; in the view of securing which, they should strive to be *making their Calling and Election sure*. 2. The Means, whereby they were *chosen* of God; *through* (rather *in*, or *by*) *Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth*. Because *Faith* was the Condition appointed of God, upon which Persons should be admitted into the Christian Church; and the Gift of the holy Spirit, conferred upon Christian Believers, (whereby they were *consecrated* to the Service of God;—) was God's express Designation, and actual Choice of them, to be the Members of his Church, attesting their Right to *Christian Baptism*. Acts x. 47. This account seems to be confirmed by the reason which the *Apostle* gives, to prove their *Election*, 1 *Thess.* i. 5. 3. The Time when they were thus chosen, *from the Beginning*; that is, of the *Apostle's* preaching, 1 *Thess.* i. 4, 5, 6, &c. 4. The *Call*, that was given them to this; the preaching of the Gospel. It was God's gracious Will and Pleasure to receive the *Gentiles* into his Church, though the *Jews* grudged them this Privilege. See Dr. BENSON in loc. Again, *Eph.* i. 4. *According as he*, (that is, God the Father, mentioned Ver. 3.) hath chosen *us in him*, (meaning Jesus Christ) *before the Foundation of the World*, &c. The *Apostle* may be understood to speak here, of God's *Purpose* and Design, to have a professed Church and People, among the *Gentiles*. See Mr. LOCKE in loc. And, since

that some of the *primitive Christians* appear to have considered these Terms, in the same popular and figurative Sense. Thus TERTULLIAN expresseth himself in his address to the Martyrs (*m*). “ We were even then
 “ called to the *Warfare* of the living God,
 “ when we answered to the Words of the
 “ *Sacrament.*” Where he speaks of *Christian Baptism*, in the common Style and Language of those Times, expressing it by a
 Word,

since the Choice, here spoken of, plainly refers to the *Gospel Period*, their being said to be *chosen, before the Foundation of the World*, can only be meant, by a known *Hebraism*, of God’s *certain Purpose* and Design, with relation to the said Choice, which was actually to take place under the Gospel Dispensation, in the *Calling* of the *Gentiles*. Hence they are said, Ver. 11. to be “ *predestinated*, according to the *Purpose* of him, who worketh all things, after the Counsel of his own Will;” executing his former Designs, in his present Dispensations. Upon other occasions, the same *Apostle* of the *Gentiles*, speaks both of *Calling* and *Election*, as the matter of a divine *Purpose*. The *Calling* of the *Gentiles*, was according to God’s eternal Purpose, *Eph. iii. 11.* compared with the foregoing Verses. See also *2 Tim. i. 9, 10, 11. Rom. viii. 28.* Again; St. *Paul* speaks of the Purpose of God, according (or with respect) to *Election*, *Rom. ix. 11.* And what *Election* there signifies—that it relates to the professed People of God, and the visible Members of his Church here upon Earth—will appear, by comparing that Context with *Malachi i. 2.* See Mr. LOCKE and Dr. WHITBY upon that Chapter *.

(*m*) Vocati sumus ad *Militiam Dei* vivi jam tunc, cum in *Sacramenti* verba respondimus.

* Note—This Point is discussed in the foregoing Discourse, on *Rom. ix. 11.* to which the Reader is referred.

Word, which alludes to the *military Oath* (n). Again, the same Author hath these Expressions, *called by Water, chosen by Blood* (o). It must be confessed, the *Valentinians* had early a more refined and philosophical Notion of *Election*, as we learn from IRENÆUS (p). But this venerable Writer represents them as a most infamous Sect of *Heretics*; whose Principles

(n) The word *Sacramentum* is a contraction of *sacrum juramentum*; and so it is rendered ἱερὸν ὄρχον, by DIONYS. HALICARN. *Antiq. Lib. VIII.* The propriety of this Term, as applied to *Baptism* and the *Lord's-Supper*, is excepted to, by several Writers. CURCELLÆUS in particular, having taken notice, that the Word, *Sacrament*, originally signified an Oath, especially the *military Oath*, &c. proceeds to ask; what Relation hath *Baptism* and the *Lord's-Supper* to these things? *Op. Theolog. P. 826.* But some Relation between them may be discerned, with a view to the notion of a *spiritual Warfare*, which manifestly gave occasion to this use of the Term. The Correspondency between *Baptism* and the *military Oath* may be hinted at, by St. Paul, when he speaks of being *baptized for the Dead*. 1 Cor. xv. 29. by way of Allusion, perhaps, to the Custom of filling up the Vacancies in the Army, with fresh Recruits. See the very learned Sir RICHARD ELLIS's fine Remark upon the Place, *Fortuita Sacra. P. 137, &c.* Further; the Words of TERTULLIAN, viz. *answering to the Words of the Sacrament*, may lead us into the Meaning of the *Apostle Peter*, when he speaks of the *answer of a good Conscience*, with reference to *Baptism*, 1 Pet. iii. 21 *.

(o) Lib. de Baptismo.

(p) Ἐαυτοὺς δὲ ὑπερυψῶσι, τελείως ἀποκαλυψῶσι καὶ σπέρμαλα ἔκλογῆς. *Advers. Heres. Lib. I. P. 31. Edit. Grabe.*

* Note.—Since this was written, the Author hath conceived a different Notion of Persons being baptized for the Dead. See the Appendix to the Discourse on 1 Cor. xv. 20.

Principles were as weak in their Foundation, as wicked in their Tendency (*q*).

And so much for the first thing, *viz.* what we are to understand by our *Calling* and *Election*.

II. Our next Enquiry is this—"What is meant by making our Calling and Election *sure*?" This matter hath been touched upon before; but I would now further observe, that to make our *Calling* and *Election* sure, is to ratify and confirm them, by a Conduct suitable to their high and holy Design; without which they would be null and void, in vain, and of no significance, or effect, with relation to the valuable Ends and Purposes of Religion and Happiness. But, to give some further Illustration to this matter, let the following Particulars be considered.

I. In order to make our *Calling* and *Election* sure, that is, to *ratify* and *confirm* them, it is necessary that we live up to our Christian

(*q*) Whether this Sort of Men gave occasion to that Reflection of CÆCILIVS, *Sic sectæ vestræ non spontaneos cupere, sed electos.* MINUT. FELIX. P. 84. Edit. Davis: or, whether it be a mere Calumny, like many other of his Censures, it is certain the Notion, he chargeth upon the *primitive Christians*, contradicts a common *Maxim*, *viz.* that *Christ* will have none but *Volunteers*, in his Service. There seems, indeed, to have been a Distinction in the Roman Discipline, between *Volunteers* and *Chosen Men*. Vid. PLIN. Epist. Lib. X. 39. But to urge a Parallel here, would, I suppose, be driving the *Metaphor* too far.

an Engagements, and thereby acquit ourselves well in the *spiritual* Warfare. The good *Soldiers* of *Jesus Christ* are called, and chosen, and faithful (r); they are faithful to their *military* Engagements. Now the *military Oath* did run in this form—"We will observe Orders, and do, to the utmost of our Power, whatsoever is commanded us by our Chiefs (s)."—In like manner the professed Followers of Christ, lay themselves under a solemn Obligation to *observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded* (t). By the said Oath, the *Roman Soldiers* obliged themselves to follow their Commanders, whithersoever they led them (u). Accordingly, it is said of the true Followers of Christ, *these are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth* (x). Whatever Expedition or Duty, we are led out upon, we must follow the *Captain of our Salvation*, with Resolution and Vigour, undaunted with the prospect of Difficulties and Dangers. This is to *walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are called* (y):—*worthy of God, who has called us to his Kingdom*

(r) Rev. xvii. 14.

(s) Ἡμᾶς πεπαιχθέντων καὶ ποιήσαν τὸ πρόσταλόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀρχόντων κατὰ δύναμιν. POLYB. Lib. 6.

(t) Matt. xxviii. 20.

(u) Ὅτε γὰρ ὁρκῶν ὁ σραϊτικὸς—ἀκολουθεῖν κελεύει τοὺς σραϊτευομένους ὅποι ποτ' ἀν' ἀγασί. DIONYS. HALICARN. Antiq. Lib XI.

(x) Rev. xiv. 4.

(y) Eph. iv. 1.

Kingdom and Glory (z).—And thus, by a worthy Deportment, becoming the Dignity of our Character and Profession, Hopes and Prospects, we shall *confirm our Calling and Election*, secure the Favour and Approbation of our heavenly Prince and Commander, and so prevent a shameful, dishonourable *Discharge*. Concerning him that *overcomes*, our Lord Christ hath declared, *I will not blot his Name out of the Book of Life* (a); an Expression, which may allude to the Muster-Roll in an *Army*, from whence the Names of the *Dead* were struck off, as well as theirs, who were cashiered (b).

2. “ That we may *confirm our Calling and Election*, or make them *sure*, we must persevere in the Service of Christ, to the “ End.” It is highly probable, considering the State of *Christians* in those Days, that this is one thing which the *Apostle* had principally in view; and that he intended to warn *Christians*, and thereby arm them, against the Danger, Sin, and Scandal of *Apostasy*; of deserting the Cause of Christ, and meditating a Revolt, like so many *Traitors* and *Renegadoes*. The *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* hath expressed this matter, “ by holding fast the “ Confidence, and rejoycing of the Hope
“ *firm*

(z) 1 Theff. ii. 12.

(a) Rev. iii. 5.

(b) Miles pulchre centuriatus est expuncto in manipulo. PLAUT. Curcul. Act iv. Sc. iv. Vid. Not. Varior. in loc. Edit. Gronov.

“ *firm* unto the end (c).” The same thing is also intended, by being *faithful unto Death* (d). To this purpose CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS observes—“ Those Persons, that do
 “ not rashly expose themselves to Death,
 “ but do it, at God’s Call, with Alacrity,
 “ and manly Fortitude, *confirm their Calling*,
 “ *or make it sure* (e).”—Language, which manifestly refers to the Words of St. Peter, under consideration. So that, according to that *learned Writer*, a *Christian* may be said to make his *Calling*, and, by Consequence, his *Election*, *sure*, when he stedfastly perseveres in the Service of *Christ*, and is even ready, when called to it, to hazard his Life, in the Cause of *Truth* and *Virtue*, rather than desert it. This fine Character another *ancient Christian Writer* hath expressed, by “ the un-
 “ corrupted *Firmness* of those that stand (f).”

But

(c) Heb. iii. 6.

(d) Rev. ii. 10.

(e) Τὴν κλήσιν—βεβαιῶσιν. STROM. Lib. VII.

MARCUS ANTONINUS. Lib. XI. Sec. 3. speaks of the
 “ *Christians*, as exposing themselves to Death, κατὰ ψιλὴν
 “ παρὰ ἄλξιν, i. e. *ab obstinatione mera*; that is, out of
 “ mere Obstinacy; as GATAKER renders the Phrase.
 “ But ψιλος signifies a *light-armed Soldier*; a Body of
 “ which was placed in the *front of the Battle*. Vid.
 “ Gr. Schol. in ARISTOPH. Thesmoph. P. 780. And
 “ so, the Meaning seems to be, that the *Christians* ex-
 “ posed themselves to Death, after the manner of a *for-*
 “ *lorn Hope*. Which shewed their Boldness and Bra-
 “ very; the Martyrs dying like Desperadoes; though
 “ that philosophic Heathen Emperour, did not applaud
 “ them for it.”

(f) Incorrumpam stantium firmitatem. CYPRIAN.
 de Lapsis.

But the noble Spirit and Resolution, which becomes a *Christian*, in this case, I cannot describe better, than by proposing the Example of *SOCRATES*, expressing himself in these Terms, a little before his Death. “ I
 “ should be guilty of a most horrid Crime,
 “ O ye *Athenians*, if I obeyed the Com-
 “ manders whom you chose; and where
 “ they appointed me a station, in *Potidæa*,
 “ and in *Amphipolis*, and in *Delios*, main-
 “ tained my Post, as well as others, and
 “ hazarded my Life: and yet, when *God*
 “ had stationed me (g), as I verily believed,
 “ that I should devote my Life to *Philosophy*,
 “ and make it my business to sit and try
 “ myself and others, should I, through Fear
 “ of Death, or any thing else, desert my
 “ Rank; this had been a grievous Crime,
 “ indeed, for which you might have justly
 “ brought an Accusation against me as an
 “ *Atheist*; or accused me of *Atheism* (h).”
 Such Language as this, breaths a spirit worthy of a brave *Christian Hero*.

3. The solemn renewing of our Sacramental Vows, or Resolutions, as Christians, upon proper occasions, may be considered as an useful *Mean*, of making our Calling and Election sure. By repeating the *military Oath*, at certain times, the Army gave fresh Assurances of their Fidelity to their Prince and

(g) Οὕτως τάττωμι.

(h) PLATO'S Apolog.

Commander (i). Now, besides *Baptism*, the Rite of Initiation, or Admission, our *Lord Jesus Christ* has instituted another positive Ordinance in his Church, for a Symbol of Christian Communion, viz. the *Lord's-Supper*, which is commonly called a *Rite of Confirmation*, or Continuance in visible Church-membership. As this Ordinance is a religious Memorial of the Death of Christ, *who is the Propitiation for our sins* (k), it may, therefore, be called a *Feast upon a Sacrifice* (l). And since it was an antient custom, to enter into Covenants, and confirm them, by *feasting together upon a Sacrifice* (m), perhaps the *Lord's-Supper* may be considered as a sort of *fæderal Rite*; whereby we renew our *Resolutions*, or *recognize our Obligations* (n), to be the Lord's. With a view to this Ordinance, we may understand the account which PLINY gave to the *Emperor TRAJAN*, of the *primitive Christians*, as he received it from some who had been of their Communion; to the following effect. "It was their Custom to meet together on a certain Day, early in the Morning, before it was light; and to sing an Hymn to *Christ*, as to a God;

(i) TACIT. Annal. Lib. I. PLIN. Epist. Lib. X. 60.

(k) 1 John ii. 2.

(l) See the learned CUDWORTH's true Notion of the Lord's-Supper.

(m) Psal. l. 5.

(n) See Plain Account, &c.

“ God (*o*); and to bind themselves, by a *Sacrament*, not to do any ill thing; but (*on the contrary*) that they should abstain from Theft, and Robbery, and Adultery, and from betraying their Trust, or denying the Pledge (*p*).” The circumstance of *time* here specified, in celebrating the *Lord's-Supper*, agrees with TERTULLIAN's account of the matter; for this Author saith expressly, “ we receive the *Sacrament* of the *Eucharist*, in our Meetings before Day (*q*).” Therefore, considering the *Lord's-Supper*, under this notion, a due serious Attendance upon it, from time to time, may be deemed an useful *Mean*, of making our *Calling and Election sure*, by impressing and reinforcing, upon our own Consciences, the sacred Ties and Obligations of Religion.

III. The third and last thing remains to be considered; namely, what is implied in giving *Diligence* to make our *Calling and Election sure*. “ Wherefore, the rather, Brethren, give Diligence, &c (*r*).” Now, to give *Diligence*, in this Affair, is to make it

K k 2

our

(*o*) It was, no doubt, on the *Lord's-Day*, that they met together; and so the *Hymn* they sung to *Christ* was, probably, an *Hymn* upon his *Resurrection*. It was customary among the *Heathens* to sing *Hymns* to their *Gods*, or in Praise of them. Θεούς τε ὑμνοῦσα πάντοτε ᾠδαῖς. DIONYS. HALICARN. Antiq. Lib. II.

(*p*) PLIN. Epist. Lib. X. 27.

(*q*) Antelucanis cætibus. De coronâ militis.

(*r*) Σπουδάζετε.

our principal care and business ; and to pursue the matter with proportionable zeal and vigour, according to the Nature and Importance of the great undertaking.

1. *To give Diligence* to make our Calling and Election sure, is to make this Affair our principal care and business. Abstracting our Minds, as much as may be, from other matters, we must be, though not solely, yet chiefly intent upon the superior concerns of *Religion*. The Affairs of this lower World must, by no means, be neglected ; but with such things we should not unnecessarily incumber ourselves ; all must be managed in a consistency with, and by way of subordination and subserviency unto, our spiritual and eternal Interest. *Seek first the Kingdom of God, &c (s)*. In this view St. Paul saith to Timothy, *Thou, therefore, endure Hardness as a good Soldier of Jesus Christ. No Man that wareth, entangleth himself with the Affairs of this Life, that he may please him, who hath chosen him to be a Soldier (t)*. Which Words may receive some Illustration from what the same Apostle hath said, upon another occasion. *He that is unmarried, careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord (u)*. Because, among other worldly matters, which the Roman Soldiers were not permitted to be concerned in, they were

(s) Matt. vi. 33.

(t) 2 Tim. ii. 3, 4.

(u) 1 Cor. vii. 32.

were not allowed to *marry* (x). To this *military* Custom, some reference may be had in the following passage. *These are they who were not defiled with Women; for they are Virgins; these are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes* (y). Undistracted with family Affairs, or any worldly and secular Matters, the true Followers of Christ firmly adhere to his Service, which they prefer to their own ease and convenience. But do not mistake me, as if I were urging *Cælibacy* upon any one. What I design by these Remarks, is only to illustrate the *Scripture*, and take occasion from thence to recommend to *Christians* in general, and to Christ's *Ministers* in particular, a superior Concern for the Interests of *Religion*, as *the one thing needful*; in comparison whereof, all other things ought to be treated as matters of Indifference, because *the Fashion of this World passeth away* (z).

2. To give *Diligence* to make our Calling and Election sure, is to pursue the Affair

K k 3

with

(x) This Matter is overlooked by Dr. HAMMOND, and other Expositors, upon the place; but, I imagine, it is one thing which St. *Paul* had in his eye, and that he designed to give *Timothy* an hint upon that Head, which he bids him to consider on, *Ver. 7.* For the fact itself, consult DION CASS. Lib. 60. TERTULLIAN Exhort. ad Castitat. HERODIAN. Lib. 3. Which last named Author saith, that the Custom aforesaid, was altered by the Emperour SEVERUS.

(y) Rev. xiv. 4.

(z) 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

with proportionable Zeal and Vigour, according to the Nature and Importance of the great undertaking ; it is an Affair which requires and deserves our best Attention and Application. We must, therefore, be seriously intent upon the matter, and apply ourselves to it with the greatest Industry, as the Language of the Apostle seems to import (a). The Diligence required in this Case, may respect both Application and Contrivance.

There must be Thought and Contrivance in the Affair. Particularly, we should take care to get ourselves furnished with the Christian Armour, and to have it always in readiness for use. *Let us cast off the Works of Darknesh, saith the Apostle, and put on the Armour of Light (b).* Alluding probably, to the Custom of Soldiers pulling off their Cloaths, when they were going to put on a Sett of Armour (c). Divesting ourselves of any evil Habits we have contracted ; we should be careful to get our Minds equiped with those Principles of *Truth* and *Virtue*, which will arm the Soul against the Powers and Works

(a) The same word is used by CTESIAs, when he represents the *Asiatic* Princes, as wholly bent upon their Pleasures, and exceeding studious in gratifying their Appetites ; *περὶ τρυφὴν σπουδάζει*. Vid. *Athenæ. Deipnos.* Lib. 12.

(b) Rom. xiii. 12.

(c) *Πρῶτον τοίνυν ἀποδυώμεν, ἀνάγκη γὰρ τοὺς μέλλοντας ὀπλιζέσθαι, γυμνῆσθαι προτέρον*. LUCIAN de Parasito. Op. Vol. 2. P. 366. Edit. Salmur.

Works of Darknes. This matter is otherwise expressed, “ by putting off, concerning
 “ the former *Conversation*, the old Man (*d*),
 “ which is corrupt, according to the deceit-
 “ ful lusts; by being renewed in the Spirit
 “ of our Mind, and putting on the new Man,
 “ which, after God, is created in Righte-
 “ ousness and true Holiness (*e*).” A Christian ought to be possessed with such a vigorous Principle of Piety and Virtue, as will be ready to exert itself, suitably upon all emergencies; ready to repel the assaults of Temptation to Sin, on the one hand, and to bear up under any difficulties or discouragements in the way of Duty, on the other hand. This is what the *Apostle* hath beautifully expressed, by the *Armour of Righteousness, on the right Hand, and on the left* (*f*); by way of Allusion to those Weapons, both offensive and defensive, which were used in War. In a word. *You should put on the whole Armour of God, as the Apostle directs, that ye may be able to stand against the Wiles of the Devil. For we wrestle not against Flesh and Blood* (*g*), *but against Principalities, against Powers, against the Rulers of the Darknes of this World,*

K k 4

against

(*d*) That is, the old Habit of Sin and Wickedness; *παλαιὸν δὲ ἔσθ' πρὸς γενέσειν φησὶν ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸν βίον.* CLEM. ALEXAND. STROM. Lib. 3.

(*e*) Ephes. iv. 22—24.

(*f*) 2 Cor. vi. 7.

(*g*) That is not against Men, but Devils—*συμβάλλοντες ἀλλὰ ἀνθρώποις αἷμα καὶ σάρκα ἔχουσι, καὶ τῆς φύσεως ἡμῖν κεκοινωκῆκοσι.* POLYÆN. Stratag. Lib. 3. Cap. 11.

against *spiritual Wickedness in High Places*. Wherefore, take unto you the whole Armour of God, that you may be able to stand in the evil Day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your Loins girt about with Truth, and having on the Breast-plate of Righteousness, and your Feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. Above all, taking the Shield of Faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery Darts of the Wicked (b). And take the Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Praying always, with all Prayer and Supplication, &c (i). For Prayer is a considerable Aid in the spiritual Warfare, whereby divine Succours are fetched in to our Assistance; and we should ever look upon God as our best Friend and Ally. *Heathen Piety* hath taught this excellent Lesson (k).

But, having furnished ourselves with proper Armour, we must endeavour to make a right use of it, and shew our Diligence in the Christian Warfare, by a close and vigorous
Applica-

(b) The violent Temptations of *Satan*, with which he assails our Virtue, compared to a sort of Weapons used in old Time, before the invention of Guns; Πυρφόροις βέλεσι χρωμένον. DIO. CASS. Lib. 48. Ἐπέβαλλε τοξείματα πυρός. APPIAN. de Bell. Civ. Lib. 4. καὶ πυρφόροις αἰσίοις ἔβαλλον. ARRIAN. de Expedit. Alex. Lib. 2. &c.

(i) Eph. vi. 11—18.

(k) Οἱ πολλοὶ τὰς πανοπλίας ἀπέθεντο, παρὰ τοῖς βωμαῖς, προσέχοντες ταῖς ἐυχαῖς. POLYÆN. Stratag. Lib. 1. Cap. xxiii.

Application. All the parts and branches of the Christian Character, must be zealously cultivated and improved, that so we may acquit ourselves well in every point of Duty and Conduct. This Notion of *Diligence* is clearly suggested. *And, beside this*, saith the Apostle, *giving all Diligence, add to your Faith, Virtue; to Virtue, Knowledge, &c. (l)*. If we would give proper *Diligence to make our Calling and Election sure*, to our Faith in Christ, we must add *Virtue*; that is, holy *Fortitude* and Courage, in the Profession and Defence of the Truth, that we may not betray it, either in our Words or Actions (*m*).
And

(l) Ver. 5—7.

(m) Persons may betray the Truth both ways. And let it be observed, by the bye, that St. *Peter* himself failed in this point, upon a certain Occasion, for which he was blamed by St. *Paul*, Gal. ii. 11, 12. It is, therefore, one of the many Blunders (which have been sufficiently exposed, particularly by three considerable Writers, Dr. LELAND, Mr. CHAPMAN, and Dr. SAMUEL CHANDLER) of a modern Author, who styles himself, for-sooth, the *Moral Philosopher*, to pretend, that St. *Peter* was in a different way of thinking from St. *Paul*, with reference to the *Liberty of the Gentiles*; because the contrary is evident from that very Passage, upon which he grounds his Opinion. It is said of *Peter*, “that he *withdrew* (or rather, he *drew-in*, which avoids the Tautology) and separated himself, fearing “them who were of the Circumcision.” So that it was *Fear* and *Cowardice*, not Principle, or any difference of Sentiment, which led him into that method of acting; and, accordingly, he is charged with *Disimulation*, Ver. 13. The Word which is rendered, in our
 Version,

And to Virtue, Knowledge; because *Courage*, without *Wisdom* and *Conduct*, will degenerate into dangerous *Rashness*. *And to Knowledge, Temperance*; that being *sober* and *vigilant*, we may be always upon our guard against the *Enemy*. *And to Temperance, Patience*; so as to *endure Hardness*, like good *Soldiers*, and vigorously sustain all the *Difficulties* and *Fatigues* of the heavenly Campaign. *And to Patience, Godliness*; not trusting too much to our own strength and prowess, but setting up our *Banners* in the *Name of the Lord*; and relying upon *God* for *Direction*, *Aid*, and *Success*, in all our endeavours, to advance his *Honour* and *Interest* in the *World*. *And to Godliness, Brotherly-Kindness*; a perfect *Harmony*, *Love*, and *Friendship* among *Fellow-Christians*. *And to Brotherly-Kindness, Charity*; a frank, open, generous *Disposition* towards all *Mankind*, every way becoming the *Christian Heroe* (n).

We

Version, *he withdrew*, is ὑπόσχεσθαι, Ver. 12. which properly imports, such a behaviour, whereby a Person *disguiseth his Sentiments*, in whole, or in part. See *Acts* xx. 20, 27. But the true Sense of the Word is not so well expressed in our Translation, as it may be explained by the following Passages. Οὐ μὲν οἶμαι γε δεῖν τὴν ἰδίαν ἀσφάλειαν σκοπεῖν ὑποσείλασθαι περὶ ὧν ὑμῖν συμφέρειν ἡγοῦμαι. DEMOSTHEN. Olynthiac. 1. Ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν εἴτ' ἄλλοτε πάποτε πρὸς χάριν εἰλόμην λέγειν ὅτι ἂν μὴ καὶ συνοίσειν ὑμῖν πεπεισμένῳ: νῦν τε ἀγινώσκω πάνθ' ἀπλῶς εἰδέν ὑποσελάμεν πεπαρήσιασμαι. Idem. Orat. 1. in Philip. Ἐπεὶ γε δεῖ μὴ εὖ ὑποσελάμενον τ' ἀληθὲς διηγῆσθαι. LUCIAN. Bis Accusat.

(n) Ver. 5, 6, 7. of this Chapter.

We have now finished the first part of our Design; and considered, in it's different branches, the important Duty of *giving Diligence* to make our Calling and Election sure.

Secondly. The other thing proposed to Consideration, may be dispatched in fewer Words; *viz.* the Argument, or Motive, which is here made use of, to enforce the said Duty. *For if you do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an Entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, &c.* In which Words, two things are included. (1.) An Assurance of Victory. (2.) The Promise of a most glorious Reward.

1. An Assurance of Victory. *For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall;* that is, “ ye shall never fall in the *field of Battle*, but gain a complete Victory over all your spiritual Enemies.” This is the proper Meaning of the Term; which confirms the Notion that hath been advanced, and gives it farther Evidence; *namely*, that the Language of the Apostle, here, is figurative, and alludes to *military Affairs* (o). Therefore, an Assurance of

(o) For this use of the Word *πλᾱίω*, let the following Passages be considered. Σπαρτῖται μὲν γε πλᾱίσαντες μάχῃ τῇ περὶ λεῦκῃρα. DIONYS. HALICARN. Lib. 2. Αἰχματομένους ἐφ’ οἷς ἔπλαισαν. PLUTARCH. in Vit. Agesil. Καὶ διεπολέμει πρὸς ἐκείνους, τότε μὲν κατορθῶν, τότε δὲ πλᾱίων

of Victory and Success, in the grand Expedition for Heaven, is included in these Words. *For if ye do these things you shall never fall.* q. d. " If you do but use proper Diligence " and Application in the Christian Warfare, " you shall come off with Honour and Applause ; you may reckon the Day your own, and promise yourselves an entire Victory over your spiritual Enemies ; nothing shall be able to stop your progress, or to hinder your advances towards the glorious Kingdom, for which you are contending. *For, as it follows, so an Entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.* All opposition shall give way to your prevailing endeavours. The World, the Flesh, and the Devil, will fly before you, like a routed Army, and leave you a free, open Passage for your marching to Heaven, in *triumphal Pomp* and Procession." Therefore,

2. We have here also the Promise of a most glorious Reward ; *namely, a Kingdom, an everlasting Kingdom, the everlasting Kingdom*

πλῆθους. STRAB. Geog. Lib. 14. Τρίτον ἦδη πλῆθοντες περὶ πάδου. APPIAN. de Bell. Annib. Καὶ μεγάλως ἐπ-
λῆσαν ὥς ἐκ μὴκέτ' ἀντιπολεμῆσαι. DIO. CASS. Lib. 40.
So the verbal Noun πλῆσιμα, signifies a defeat in Battle.
Καὶ μαθὼν καὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων πλῆσιματα, ἔφυγε. DIO. CASS.
Lib. 38. Μετὰ τὸ πλῆσιμα τὸ ἐν χαιρωνέᾳ. PAUSAN.
Beotic. Καὶ τὸ ἐν Ἀργεὶ ποταμοῖς αὐθις Ἀθηναίων πλῆσιμα.
ARRIAN. Exped. Alexand. Lib 1.

dom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ ; who, as our common Head, Leader, and Fore-runner, hath already taken possession of this Kingdom, and effectually secured it to all his faithful Followers. If then, we consider the glorious excellency and magnificence of the Reward, it's perpetuity and endless duration, together with it's absolute certainty, all which Particulars are plainly suggested—is not this a mighty Motive, and a most powerful Argument, to perswade us all *to give the utmost Diligence, to confirm our Calling and Election,* by a suitable Conduct, and a worthy Behaviour? What incredible pains will Men take! What hazards will they run! What difficulties and dangers will they not encounter, for the sake of an earthly Crown, which commonly fits loose, as well as uneasy, upon the Head that wears it! And should a *Christian* think any thing too much, either to do, or to suffer, in order to obtain *a Crown of Glory, which fadeth not away? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution, or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or Sword? Nay, (but) in all these things we are Conquerors, and more than Conquerors, through him that loved us (p).* The great Love of Christ, who was made perfect through Sufferings, that he might bring many Sons unto Glory, may well inspire us with the most grateful respects,

respects, with the most steady regards, and inviolable attachment to him, at all times. And, since he hath prepared for us an *everlasting Kingdom*, and also furnished us with the most proper Means of obtaining it.—For God *hath given us all things, which pertain to Life and Godliness, through the Knowledge of him who hath called us to Glory and Virtue (q)*; —the faithful Followers of *Christ*, will not only be Conquerors, but rich and eternal Gainers. Many have hazarded their Lives for the honour and advantage of others, who reaped all the benefit of their Toil, Sweat, and Blood. But the *valorous Christian* conquers for himself; the *Kingdom* he contends for, will be his own Inheritance. Win the heavenly Crown, and wear it. The shining Squadrons of light, who have fought manfully, under the Banner of Christ, against his and their Enemies, *shall reign with him for ever and ever (r)*, in the *Kingdom of their Father*. *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear (s)*.

The C O N C L U S I O N.

From what hath been discoursed, the following *Inferences* and *Reflections* may be deduced.

1. *The*

(q) Ver. 3.

(r) Rev. xxii. 5.

(s) Matt. xiii. 43.

1. *The Kingdom of God meets with great Opposition in the World.* This Opposition was early formed, and has been maintained with various success from Age to Age. A most strange, unaccountable *Phænomenon*; if one did not consider the Nature of *God's moral Government*, that it is not supported by mere Power; otherwise it were utterly impossible, for any number of Creatures whatsoever, to form a Party against the Almighty; because nothing can be a match for *Omnipotence*. But the divine Being exerts only *so much* Power, as his Wisdom sees fit, in the Government of *moral Agents*, without destroying their proper Agency. By this Means it cometh to pass, that many, abusing their natural Liberty, and misapplying the Powers God hath given them, join in a wilful Opposition to his Kingdom, and so make themselves accountable for the guilty part they act in this Affair. Therefore, in a just estimation of things, the being of Sin in the World, is so far from any reasonable Objection against the Providence of God, that it is rather a Vindication of it; because it illustrates the Wisdom of the divine Administration.

2. "Most wise and merciful is the Design
 " of the *Christian Revelation*; since it is in-
 " tended to reclaim Sinners from their Apo-
 " stacy, and to engage them in the Cause
 " of Truth, and Virtue, and real Religion."
 To this blessed End and Purpose, the Gos-
 pel

pel of Christ is so admirably well adapted ; such an excellent Mean it is to support the moral Government of God among Men, that with great Elegance and Propriety, this Dispensation is called the *Kingdom of God*. What reason have we to be thankful for it ! *The God of all Grace* (and an adorable Instance it is of his Grace and Goodness) *hath called us to his eternal Glory, by Christ Jesus* (t). “ May the Adversaries of the Christian Revelation, and all that oppose themselves, be convinced of their Error ; if God, peradventure, will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth ; and that they may recover themselves out of the Snare of the Devil, who are taken Captive by him at his Will (u).”

3. “ The

(t) 1 Pet. v. 10.

(u) 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26. There hath been, of late, a Dispute about the meaning of this Text. It is not likely that *αὐτοῦ* and *ἐκείνου* relate to the same Person, or Antecedent. See Dr. WHITBY in loc. The former, I suppose, belongs to the nearer, the latter to the remoter. Therefore, *εἰς τὸ ἐκείνου θέλημα*, must be referred, I imagine, not to *ἐζωγρημένοι*, but *ἀνανήψουσιν*, and signifies the *terminus ad quem* ; as *ἐκ τῆς τῆ διαβόλου παγίδος*, is the *terminus a quo*. That Participle, I suppose, points at *διαβόλου παγίδος*, and signifies the *Devil's Captures*. The literal Sense of the Word, is, *to take alive*. *Τὰς πλείους αὐτῶν διεφθειραν, πολλὰς δὲ ζῶντας ἔδησαν*. POLYÆN. Stratag. Lib. 1. Cap. viii. comp. Lib. 2. Cap. xxvii. & *alibi passim*. The same thing is thus expressed ; *πολλὰς μὲν ἀνείλον, πολλὰς δὲ ζῶντας ἔλκον*. Idem. Lib. 7. Cap. xliii. comp. Lib. 8. Cap. x. But that it signifies to take, with a design *to keep alive*, doth not appear

3. " The Christian Warfare is to be maintained, and carried on, not by carnal, but " spiritual Methods, because it is a spiritual " Warfare." So that, whatever Officers Christ hath appointed in his Church, he hath invested them only with spiritual Powers. " It was foretold of Christ, *Thy People shall* " *be willing, in the Day of thy Power* (x); because they were to be invited, and drawn, into his Service, by powerful means of Persuasion, not driven or forced, by compulsive Methods. If the Apostles of Christ claimed

appear from the *Notation* of the Word, but must be determined by the manner of Discourse, and the circumstances of things. That it was an ancient Custom, in some Places however, to *preserve alive Captives* taken in War, may be inferred from the following Passage.

Οὐκ ἔς' ἀνυσὲν τόν δέ σοι κατακλιανεῖν.
 Ἄλλως ἄρ' αὐτὸν αἰχμαλώτον ἐλομεν;
 Εἴργει δὲ δὴ τίς τόνδε μὴ θανεῖν νόμος;
 Τοῖς τῆς δὲ χάρας προσάταισιν ἔδοκεῖ
 Τί δὲ τόδ' ἐχθρὸς τοῖσι δ' ἑκαλὸν κλιανεῖν;

N. B. Οὐκ ὄν τ' ἰν' αὐγὴ ζῶνθ' ἔλωσι ἐν μάχῃ.

EURIPID. *Heraclidæ*.

But, when Animals were taken alive, in hunting; fowling, &c. it was generally with a design to *kill* them; and the mention of a *Snare*, seems to point at some such Sense of the Word in this Passage, comp. Psal. xci. 3. In this view, there is a peculiar Propriety in the Term *ἀνανήλωσι*; which signifies *to grow sober again, after a fit of Drunkenness*; and this may allude to the Art of fowling; Πᾶν δὲ ὄρεον ἐυχερῶς ἀγρεύσεις, εἰὰν οἶνον ἐν ἀσγείοις μεθ' ὕδατος κεκραμένον οἶνωδέερον ἀπόθοιο; GEOPONIC. seu de Re Rustic. Lib. xiv. Cap. 21. Edit. Cantab. per NEEDHAM.

(x) Psal. cx. 3.

the honourable Character of his *Embassadors*, it was only to assert the Authority he had given them, to *pray* Sinners, in his Name, to be *reconciled* unto God (y). *The Kingdom of God cometh not with Observation* (with external Pomp and Shew, like the splendid Kingdoms of this World) *neither shall they say, lo here, or lo there; for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you* (z). It is a spiritual, moral Kingdom, an Empire over Minds, a Dominion and Sovereignty over Mens hearts; *a Kingdom of Truth and Virtue, of Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the holy Ghost* (a). Therefore, the true interests of this divine Kingdom, can be promoted by spiritual Ways and Means alone. *Though we walk in the Flesh, saith the Apostle, we do not war after the Flesh. For the Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal* (such as derive their Efficacy from an arm of Flesh) *but mighty through God, (divinely mighty, and spiritually powerful, in their Nature, Tendency, Manner of operation and effects) to the pulling down of strong Holds; casting down Imaginations, and every high*

(y) 2 Cor. v. 20. Reconciliation of Parties at Variance, is one great end of *solemn Embassies*; which may abate the Prejudices of some Men against the Title of *Embassadors*, as applied to the Apostles of our Lord. It is manifestly taken in this Sense, here, by St. Paul. Ἐν δὲ πρεσβείᾳ ἄρα ὃς ἂν φίλος ἀντὶ πολεμίων παρασκευάζῃ; XENOPH. Memorab. Lib. iv. Cap. 6. Sec. 14. Πρεσβεύοντες εὐθὰ δ' ἤκομεν—περὶ πολέμου καταλλαγῆς—ARISTOPH. Aves.

(z) Luke xvii. 20, 21.

(a) Rom. xiv. 17.

high thing which exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God ; and bringing into Captivity every thought to the Obedience of Christ (b) : To captivate the Souls of Men, not to enslave their Bodies ; to triumph over their Ignorance and Errors, their Follies and Vices, by the armour of Light, by the force of Truth, by the sovereign dint of Reason and Religion, is the proper design of the Gospel, and a Gospel-Ministry.

4. “ The most dutiful and loyal Regards “ are to be paid to Jesus Christ, as being “ our *Lord*, as well as our Saviour.” The Lord Jesus Christ is the Captain of our Salvation, and, as it were, Commander in Chief in the spiritual Warfare, by the commission and appointment of God the Father. His *written Orders* we have in the *holy Scripture*, which we are indispensably obliged to obey ; *observing all things whatsoever he hath commanded ; because, all Power in Heaven and Earth is given to him (c).* The Father judgeth no Man, but hath committed all Judgment to the Son ; that all Men might honour the Son, *as they honour the Father (d) ;* by yielding the same dutiful Homage, and loyal Obedience to his divine Authority and Commands ; so that from his Sentence, there lies no Appeal (e).

L 1 2

There-

(b) 2 Cor. x. 3—5.

(c) Matt. xxviii. 18, 20.

(d) John v. 22, 23.

(e) Militiæ ab eo, qui imperabit, provocatio ne esto ; quodque

Therefore, while we justly disclaim all human Authorities in matters of Religion and Conscience, and, in this respect, call no Man *Master upon Earth*; let us remember, that *we have a Master in Heaven, even Christ (f)*, and so conform ourselves to his Mind and Will, both in Judgment and Practice.

5. *Lastly*. “To miscarry in the Affair of Religion, must be highly inexcusable in any Christian;” because we are positively assured, that we shall succeed in this Affair, if we do but use proper *Diligence* and Application. Consequently, a miscarriage here, must be owing to the want of *Diligence*, on our part. What remains then, but that *we sit down and count the cost*? Let us consider seriously, what we have to do; shake off carnal Sloth and Security, and apply ourselves, with Fear and Trembling, to the great Work of our Salvation. A great Work to be sure it is, which you have undertaken, who are engaged in the spiritual Warfare; and stand *marshaled*, as it were, *in battle array for eternal Life*. Great Opposition you may expect in the glorious Enterprize. Many, alas, but too many, have miscarried in the attempt; and *the Shield of the mighty hath been vilely cast away*. All this should but animate your Courage, awaken your Caution, and invigorate

quodque is, qui bellum gerat, imperasset, jus ratumque esto. CICERO de Legib. Lib. 3.

(f) Matt. xxiii. 8.

rate your Resolution. God hath given a *Banner to them that fear him, that it may be displayed because of the Truth (g)*. The Spirit of the Lord will lift up a Standard against his Enemies (h). Deserters there are, and will be, from the *Christian Standard*; such *Offences will come*; but let not this discourage and cast us down. If the Prince of Darkness hath erected a great many Trophies, *greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the World (i)*. And we are assured of Success, Victory, everlasting Triumph, and Glory, by him, who can give it, and will give it also to faithful, persevering Endeavours. Therefore gird up the Loins of your Mind; march on, *brave Christians*, with undaunted Courage; advance boldly in the cause of *Truth and Virtue*; take the Kingdom of Heaven with a noble Violence. *O glorious Contest! O most glorious Victory (k)*! Therefore, *watch ye, stand fast in the Faith, quit you like Men, be strong (l)*. “Now unto him that is able
 “to keep you from *falling*, and to present
 “you faultless, before the Presence of his
 “Glory, with exceeding Joy; to the only
 “wise God, our Saviour, be Glory, and Ma-
 “jesty, Dominion, and Power, both now
 “and ever.” *Amen.*

(g) Psal. lxxx. 4.

(h) Isa. lix. 19.

(i) 1 John iv. 4.

(k) ὁ καλῶν ἔργων—καὶ καλλίστης μάχης. CEB. Tab.

(l) 1 Cor. xvi. 13.



A
S U P P L E M E N T
T O T H E

CHRISTIAN WARFARE, in Defence
of the Plan upon which that Dis-
course is formed.

SO fair an Opportunity now offering it-
self, the Occasion seems to invite atten-
tion to the Notice which hath been taken of
the *Christian Warfare*, by some Writers of
Distinction; particularly, two late worthy and
much esteemed Friends of the Author, in
their *Notes* on the Text.

Dr. G. BENSON, who revised that Dis-
course, and forwarded the Publication, after
mentioning the Notion of *Calling* and *Elec-
tion*, advanced in the *Christian Warfare*, adds,
—“ Others apprehend, that *Voco*, to call,
“ is never applied by any Classic Writer to
“ *military Affairs*,” &c.

In answer to which, the Reader is desired
to observe, (1.) The proper Question here,
is

is not about the meaning of a *Latin*, but a *Greek Word*. Therefore, (2.) Supposing the Observation upon the Application and Meaning of *Voco*, to *call*, were true; it cannot affect the sense of the *Greek Word*, which is applied to *military Affairs*, by good *Classic Writers* (quoted Page 480.). But, (3.) It proves to be a great and unaccountable Mistake. For, *Voco*, to *call*, is not seldom applied to *military Affairs*, by *Classic Writers*. A few Examples may suffice for the present (a). (4.) The Word *Voco*, to *call*, in it's primary Sense and Acceptation among the *Latins*, signifies to *cite*, or to *summon* Persons to make their appearance (b). Which Idea better suits a *military Muster*, than a *festival Occasion* (the other thing hinted at in the Objection). Accordingly, TERTULLIAN (cited Page 491.) uses the Word, *Voco*, to *call*, in a *military Sense*. And, though he is no *Classic Writer*, he understood the *Roman Language, Laws, and Customs* (c).

(5.) The Words *Calling* and *Election*, in *St. Peter's Stile*, must both refer to the same Business. But the latter Word seems to be

L 1 4

most

(a) Cum ad arma Consules ex S. C. vocassent. M. T. CICERO. Orat. pro. C. Raberio.—Ad arma vocarent. Idem. Orat. pro. P. Sextio.—Vocare tribus jubet, dantes nomina sacramento adigit, & superfluente multitudine curam dilectus in Consules partitur. C. Corn. Tacit. Hist. Lib. 3.

(b) Vid. Aul. GELLIUS. Lib. 13. Cap. 12, 13.

(c) Vid. EUSEB. Lib. 2. Cap. 2.

most applicable to a *military* Affair; and therefore the former Word must equally admit of the same application. (6.) The *Latin* Words, *Lectus* and *Lego*, are used by VIRGIL and SENECA (quoted Page 480.) to express, not the *Choice* of the Army, as is suggested, but the *Army* itself, which was raised by the Choice of proper Men for the service, out of the *superfluous*, or redundant *Multitude*; as TACITUS speaks (*d*). And in the same sense is the Word *Lectus*, used by LIVY (*e*). (7.) With respect to the Meaning of the *Greek* Word, $\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\iota\omega$, sufficient Authorities are produced from *Classic* Writers (Page 507, 508.) for it's *military* sense, as denoting to *fall in Battle*. And Dr. BENSON himself, upon another Occasion (*f*), takes notice, that this same *Verb* is used *Ten* times by the LXX. and always signifies to *fall in Battle*. The *Latin* Word, *cadere*, to *fall*, is used in the same sense by CICERO, when he speaks of *falling bravely* (*g*). (8.) If the Word, $\epsilon\iota\sigma\delta\omicron\varsigma$, signifies a *Way*, or *Passage*, as is remarked, it may properly denote the Passage of an Army in motion and marching in *Battle-array*, or *triumphal Procession*. And Soldiers may be said to *make good their Way*,
when

(*d*) See Page 519.

(*e*) — Qui ab Romano miles lectus sit. T. LIV. Lib. 27. Cap. 9.

(*f*) Notes on Jude. Ver. 24.

(*g*) Cadere fortiter. Ep. Famil. 3. Lib. 14.

when they secure their March, and carry their point. Said *Achish* to *David* (1 Sam. xxix. 6.) *Thy going out; and thy coming in with me (b) in the Host, is good in my Sight.* Here we see the Word in question expressly applied to a *military* March.

Upon the whole then, it should still seem, that St. *Peter's* Language under Consideration, more properly alludes to a *military* Affair, than a *festival* Occasion ; especially comparing it with that parallel Place, (Rev. xvii. 14.) where a *War* is expressly mentioned, and which, Dr. DODDRIDGE ingenuously owns, is well urged by way of *Illustration*.

But this valuable Writer, notwithstanding that fair Concession, appears, by his way of speaking, not to have been quite satisfied with the account given in the *Christian Warfare*, of the *Christian Calling* and *Election*. For, having said that—"the Author hath proved by a great Number of learned Quotations, that this was the case in the *Greecian* Armies, &c ;" he thus proceeds—"But
" I cannot think, that by this we are to de-
" termine our Notion of the *Christian Calling*
" and *Election* ; and whoever should attempt
" to apply this Idea to such *Phrases*, in a
" multitude of Places, would find it utterly
" unsuitable."

Now here let it be observed, (1.) The Doctor hath committed a small Mistake, in making

(b) ἡ ἐξοδος σου, καὶ ἡ εἰσόδός σου. LXX.

making mention of the *Grecian* Armies. For the *Quotations* he refers to, were produced to shew, what was the Custom in the *Roman* Armies; (see Page 479.) and accordingly, they are taken from Authors that wrote *Roman* History, though some of them used the *Greek* Language. Which the Doctor should have considered. (2.) If the Notion of *Calling* and *Election*, advanced in the *Christian Warfare*, gives a proper Interpretation of St. *Peter's* Words (however these same Terms may be used in other Places) which Dr. DODDRIDGE seems loth to deny; this is sufficient to justify the *Plan* of that Discourse; for it can be no fault in a Preacher, to keep close to his Text. (3.) Though he speaks of a *multitude of Places*, where this Idea of such *Phrases* is utterly unsuitable; it is somewhat remarkable, that the Doctor hath not referred to any one single Passage of that kind. What could be the meaning of so much Reserve? (4.) If the Words of St. *Peter* under Consideration, which have been commonly thought as favourable to the vulgar Doctrine of *Calling* and *Election*, as any other Text in the *Bible*, are nevertheless capable of a different Construction; is it not a fair Presumption, that many other Passages (some of which are referred to Page 489—491.) if not the whole *multitude of Places*, of the like nature, may admit of the same, or a *similar* Interpretation? But without positively

tively deciding upon the Point at present, let the matter be referred to further Consideration, and every one left at last to abound in his own sense.

Having made these Remarks upon two deceased Authors; the nature of the Subject, which hath given occasion to so much Controversy, suggests a suitable and serious Reflection, which may help to reconcile one more to the thoughts of Death. For, to conclude in the Words of a great Man (*i*). “ It
 “ will make you the more willing to die, if
 “ you consider, from what sort of things you
 “ will then be released; and with what manner of Men, you will be no further engaged. It is true, you ought not to be
 “ offended at such matters; but endeavour
 “ to cure them, and patiently bear them. However, be it remembered, that Death
 “ will not remove you from Men of agreeing Sentiments or Opinions. For this, in effect, is the only thing which could make
 “ one fond of Life, were we permitted to live
 “ with Persons all of one mind. But now, you see, what Trouble arises from the jarring Discordancy of those among whom we
 “ live. So that, as things are, one may see
 “ cause to say, *Come quickly, O Death; lest I*
 “ *also should forget myself* (*k*).”

(*i*) μάλιστα σε εύκολον πρὸς τὸν θάνατον ποιήσει. κ. τ. λ.
 M. ANTONIN. Lib. 9. Sec. 3.

(*k*) Vid. T. GATAK. in loc.



AS this Volume of Discourses begins with the *Connection of natural and revealed Religion*, it may not be improper to conclude with the following Lines, which have relation to the same Argument—Divine Instruction from God's Works and Word.

P S A L M XIX.

I.

THE Glory of their Builder, God,
Yond lofty Heav'ns declare abroad,
And all that vast Expanse.
Behold a Deity display'd,
By Morning Light and Ev'ning Shade,
As both in Turns advance.

II.

The Frame and Order of the whole,
As animated by one Soul,
One common Language speak.
Their Voice is understood by all,
Who dwell around this earthly Ball,
The *Indian, Jew, and Greek.*

III.

III.

The Sun's *revolving* Orb, see there!
 Bright Form ! How grand does it appear,
 From *Chambers* of the East !
 When rising with a radiant Face,
 And flusht to run it's *daily* Race,
 With rapid *fervent* Haste.

IV.

In moral Lines we read the LORD ;
 His Name is written in his Word ;
 That perfect Rule of Life.
 Here Truth and Duty we discern,
 And each with greater Ease may learn,
 Than in the Schools of Strife.

V.

The choicest *Treasure* here is found ;
 The *sweetest* Comforts here abound,
 T' enrich and chear the Mind.
 Attention to thy Laws who give,
 And by those sacred Precepts live,
 A great Reward do find.

VI.

But, who can tell, how oft he strays,
 From pure Religion's holy Ways,
 In Thought, or Word, or Deed ?

For heedless Faults, wash off the Stain;
 And from all wilful Sins restrain,
 For which my Heart might bleed.

VII.

My ev'ry Word, and ev'ry Thought,
 To Truth and Virtue's Standard brought,
 Be pleasing in thy Sight.
 On Thee, O LORD, my heav'nly Friend,
 For Grace and Mercy I depend,
 To set, and keep me right.

NOTES.

Stanza III. Line 1. "Sun's revolving Orb, &c."] This whole Representation, or Description, is evidently formed upon the Plan of the old Philosophy, which supposed the Sun to move round the Earth, as it's Center. Conformably to which Hypothesis, the Psalmist speaks of a *Tabernacle*, that is, an *Ambulatory*, or moveable *Tent*, being set for the Sun, Ver. 4. in the common Copies. By which Expression he seems to point at the annual Revolution of the Sun, which, as it were, shifts it's Station in the Heavens, through the *Ecliptic*, with the changing Seasons of the Year. The Hebrew Poet then goes on methodically to describe the Sun's diurnal Motion. Ver. 5. 6.

Stanza IV. Line 6. "Schools of Strife."] In a free Translation, such as is here attempted, perhaps, the Liberty will be indulged of introducing this Sentiment, by way of Illustration; with an eye to the jarring Opinions and Disputes of the *Philosophers*, who groped in the dark, and lost their way. *Professing themselves to be wise, they became Fools.* Rom. i. 22. And thus, in fact, the World by Wisdom, or Philosophy, knew not God. 1 Cor. i. 21. It is observable, that LUCIAN, though himself

himself an Heathen Writer, hath ridiculed the Philosophers of his Time, for their vain pretensions to Wisdom. Op. Vol. I. Page 301. and Vol. II. Page 274. Edit. SALMUR. However, one Philosopher of an older standing, and of the first Rank in his Profession, I mean, "the divine PLATO," (as M. FICINUS styles him) "the *Prince of Genius, and Learning,*" (according to CICERO) seems to speak the Language of this Psalm, in the first part, when, with a view, to the periodical *Successions of Day and Night*, he says, Ὀυρανὸς οὐδέποτε παύεται διδάσκων ἀνθρώπους i. e. "Heaven
" never ceaseth from instructing Mankind." EPI-
NOMIS.

Stanza VI. Line 4. *Heedless Faults.*] We have here a plain Reference to the known Distinction under the Law (Levit. iv. 2, &c.) between sins of *Ignorance*, or Inadvertency, and sins of *Presumption*. Vid. J. CLERIC. in loc. Which Distinction is aimed at in the foregoing Lines. But such like Peculiarities, both in this, and other Psalms, are frequently overlooked, or suppressed in the common Version, where sometimes *Improprieties* are introduced in the room of Elegancies. Thus, according to our *English Translation*, *secret Faults*, and *presumptuous Sins*, are improperly contrasted together, and stand in opposition to each other. For, presumptuous Sins may be, and often are committed with all possible Secrecy. See Ps. li. 4. compared with 2 Sam. xii. 12.

Stanza VII. Line 1. My ev'ry Word, &c.] The Psalmist having before prayed for the due Regulation of his *Actions*; he now presents his Supplication to God, for the right Government of his *Words* and *Thoughts*. But the true Sentiment here is lost, or greatly obscured, in the common Versions, by limiting the Sense, to the case of *religious Worship*; whereas it properly extends to the course of a *religious Life* in general. The like Inaccuracy may be observed in the Interpretation commonly given of Psalm xxiii. 6. When *David* there speaks of his *dwelling in the House of the Lord for ever*; his Words have been applied to the *Temple*, which was not built in his Days.

David

David was no *Priest*, or *Levite*, he could have no Expectation of always dwelling in the House of the Lord, as denoting either the Temple, or any other Place of God's public Worship, which was called *the House of the Lord*; though, as an expression of his great Piety, he sometimes wished for that sacred Privilege. Psal. xxvii. 4. Therefore, by the *House of the Lord*, in this Place, it seems more natural to understand the *gracious Presence of God*, and the *favourable regards* of his *kind indulgent Providence*; from which, upon the ground of his former Experience, the holy Psalmist promised himself the Happiness of continual Protection and Support.

The nature of the *Allusion* here, to a generous Entertainment at the *House* of a noble Friend, before described, (in all the Circumstances of *furnishing the Table*, *anointing* the Guests when seated, according to ancient Custom, Luke vii. 46. and then *filling their Cups*, Ver. 5.) easily accounts for the turn of Expression, without having recourse to the Notion of a *Temple*, or of any Place of divine Worship at all.











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